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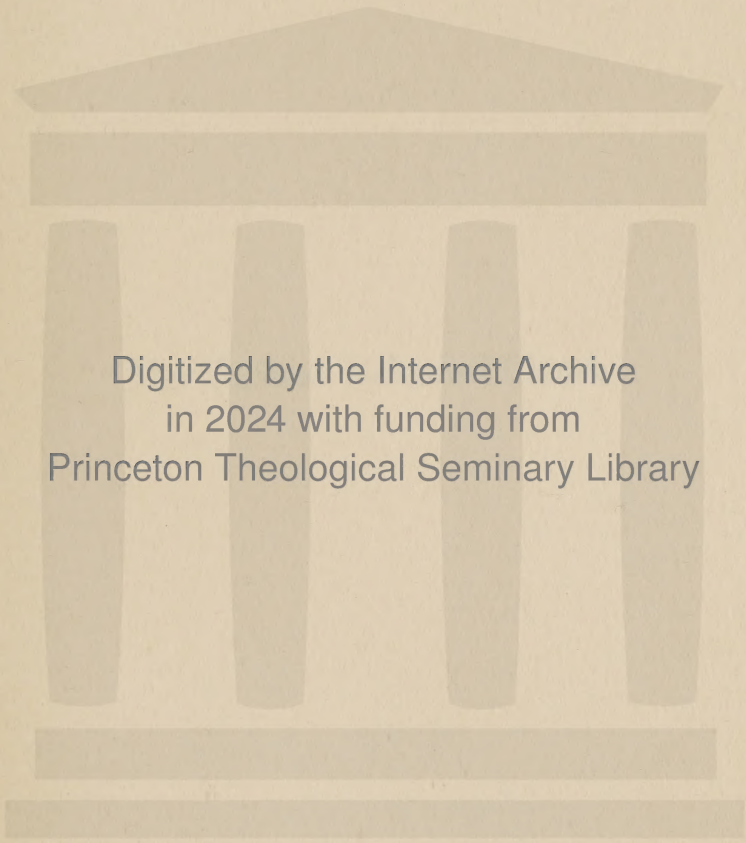
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The Christian Reformed Church

The Christian Reformed Church

A STUDY IN ORTHODOXY

by

JOHN KROMMINGA, TH.D.

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1949

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JOHN KROMMINGA

TO MY WIFE

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FOREWORD

The processes by which institutions change, or attempt to resist change, are of fundamental interest to historians and sociologists. A particularly promising subject for analysis by the social historian is the Christian Reformed Church, which originated as a secession from the Netherlands State Church and was transplanted to the United States during the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Christian Reformed Church, by unremitting resistance to the prevailing tone of the American cultural and social environment, has sought, with an impressive degree of success, to perpetuate the strict Calvinistic pattern of theology, church government and worship, and especially the Calvinistic idea that every area of life must be dominated by religious ideals. In seeking to resist the prevailingly anti-Calvinistic forces of the American environment during the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the Christian Reformed Church used principally two methods — deliberate cultural and ecclesiastical isolation, depending largely on retention of the Dutch language; and the maintenance of a very ambitious system of Christian schools, extending from the elementary level through college and theological seminary. Thus a fixed pattern — language, culture, and religion — was fortified against hostile environmental influences.

Actually, of course, the insulation of Church from environment was never as complete as superficially it appeared to be. Such widely discussed American social issues as slavery, the Union issue during the Civil War, labor, war and peace during the twentieth century, and such American religious questions as infant salvation, the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, interdenominational co-operation, efforts to "enrich" public worship, and the decline of family worship — to mention only a few — all greatly influenced the development of the Christian Reformed Church.

The Christian Reformed Church today obviously faces a crisis. With the language barrier broken down since the First World War, anti-Calvinistic influences have rapidly increased. The Church now confronts the searching question, Can the assimilation of influences from the environment be critical and selective, or must it be indiscriminate and destructive? This increased contact with the American milieu has stimulated the Christian Reformed Church to greater efforts to influence its environment in a positive way by methods which include a very ambitious denominational radio program. It is still too early to answer

the question, Will these aggressive methods help to confirm the Church in its distinctive heritage, or will they accelerate the process of adaptation?

Dr. Kromminga, in the work here introduced, presents a history of the Christian Reformed Church organized around that Church's most distinctive characteristics — its effort to maintain a fully-rounded Calvinistic orthodoxy in the face of contrary forces in the American social and cultural environment. The study, based on extensive investigation of source materials, is presented by the author in a style that is commendably objective and clear. It should prove of interest and value, not only to members of the Christian Reformed Church, but to other students of the American religious scene.

Princeton Theological Seminary Lefferts A. Loetscher

I

INTRODUCTION

THE period from the Civil War to the present has been a crucial time for most American denominations. This is particularly true in theology, where advancing liberalism brought greater changes in those eighty-odd years than in any similar period since Reformation days. The Church faced new problems, which seemed to call for new attitudes for their proper treatment. The emphasis was shifted from the other world to this world and from spiritual to social problems. The very idea of the Church was changed in important respects for many American denominations. Among the other developments in American Protestantism, there has recently come a decline in the vitality of church life and a sharp drop in attendance upon worship services and participation in other church activities.

These profound theological changes did not take place in a vacuum. They were set in an atmosphere of sweeping social changes, which greatly influenced theological development. Certain forces which had been operative since the beginning of American national life continued to operate during this period. Such forces are the influence of the frontier upon American life and the influence of the ideas of the Enlightenment, as reflected in American political democracy.

But in addition to these forces, many new and powerful trends took shape. The economic changes were far-reaching. The Civil War had so stimulated invention and industrialization that by 1894 the United States led the world in manufacturing. The rise of big business and the rise of the city were concomitants of this development. The awareness of the problems of the laboring man, present in a mild form as early as 1830, underwent an increase proportionate to that in industrialization. Socially, America continued in her role as the melting pot, with no single European tradition predominant in her life. Reform in working and living conditions, the rise of women, temperance agitation, and the problems of racial minorities occupied a great deal of American

attention. Politically, reforms were found necessary both in national and city affairs. The trend in national politics after the Civil War was in the direction of centralization of authority. Gradually the United States emerged as a power to be reckoned with in world affairs. This situation was reflected in the cultural sphere, where American ideas began to have an international influence.

The United States was therefore a nation which was finding itself, finding its place in the world, making necessary adjustments to its problems. Many basic attitudes were in flux during this period. Rigidity and traditionalism were out of place in such a situation. It was felt that change and adaptation were necessary and right. Quite naturally, this attitude was carried into the field of theology. Such an atmosphere was peculiarly suited to the advance of theological liberalism. This force may be said to have worked most distinctly in those denominations which looked upon themselves as truly American.

But in the face of the advance of liberalism there are some denominations which have retained their theological systems almost intact throughout this crucial period. Not only formally, but in the practical application of doctrine to life, they remain today substantially as they were almost a century ago. Among these conservative churches, at least some have also experienced the retention of their vitality, so that they must be called stronger today than they were before.

The Christian Reformed Church is such a church. Not only have its doctrinal standards remained basically unchanged from the time of its organization to the present, but such time-honored practices as catechetical instruction, catechism preaching, church discipline, family visitation, and church visitation are still regularly observed. At the same time, far from losing its vitality, the denomination has vastly increased the influence which it wields. American church history affords few better examples of the experience of an orthodox Reformed church than those contained in the story of the Christian Reformed Church.

It is our purpose in this study to determine what is the nature of the orthodoxy of that church and what the reasons are for its continuance even to the present day. No loyal member of the Christian Reformed Church, such as the author professes to be, would hesitate to claim that among those reasons the favor of God and divine support play a most important part. In this respect there is among Christian

Reformed people an attitude akin to that which Dr. Perry Miller ascribes to the New England Puritans, *viz.* that they were a chosen people of God with a divine mission in the world.[1]

But those reasons, because they might easily smack of partiality and because they are not measurable, are not properly subjects of historical study. We shall concentrate on attempting to find adequate human reasons for the continued orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church. We shall find such reasons in the origin and early development of the denomination, in the defensive measures taken to resist the impact of the environment, and in the aggressive measures by which the denomination sought to make its orthodoxy felt by the environment.

1. Perry Miller, **The New England Mind** (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1939), Chap. XVI, passim.

CHAPTER I

The Orthodox Start of the Christian Reformed Church

THE Christian Reformed Church was born of an effort to preserve intact the Reformed heritage of the Dutch Church. To gain the facts of its origin we shall have to trace the reorganization of the Dutch Church, the Secession of 1834, the emigration to America, and the ill-fated union with the Reformed Church in America.

Under the provisions of the Congress of Vienna, the Netherlands became a monarchy under William I. The new monarch faced a church which had suffered a great deal in prestige and vitality since 1795. He imposed upon that church a reorganization which must be interpreted as a sincere desire to help it, but which had unfortunate results. The changes moved in the direction of centralizing authority. The Provincial Synods were abolished in favor of a National Synod. The power of the Classis and of the Provincial Synods was vested in newly-created Classical Boards and Provincial Boards.[1] The Classis was stripped of all governing authority and was reduced to a gathering of ministers for fellowship. Not only did the king impose this reorganization upon the Church without its consent, but he retained control over the major bodies by appointing their members. Surprisingly enough, the Dutch people meekly accepted these changes, despite their known capacity for resistance.[2]

The theological changes instituted by the National Synod were subtle, but far-reaching. The liturgical writings lost their authoritative force, being considered as mere aids for inexperienced ministers. The Formula of Subscription lost all semblance of binding authority, and became a mere expression of personal loyalty on the part of the individual minister. The mention of the Canons of Dort was omitted from the

1. D. H. Kromminga, The Christian Reformed Tradition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943), p. 47.

2. Among the reasons for this meek acceptance were loyalty to the House of Orange, war weariness, and theological rationalism.
Ibid., pp. 75 f.

Formula, and the Church neglected to commemorate the great Synod from which those canons had come.[3]

The few ministerial voices which were raised in objection to those changes found a considerable degree of support among the laity. This lay opposition to the changes was aided by several factors. The orthodox within the Church had a form of separate organization in the conventicles, which gave them an independent and unified voice.[4] Further aid came from two religious movements which had swept the country. The first was the "Reveil," or awakening, which was limited to learned and aristocratic people. This movement stemmed from the work of Robert Haldane in the exposition of the Scriptures in Geneva. His influence was carried to the Netherlands by Caesar Malan. The movement was primarily theological, seeking a return to the old faith, but it involved an enthusiasm reminiscent of the Methodist Revival and other revivals of a similar nature. Partially as a result of the activities of the members of the Reveil, a great revival of religion swept the common people.[5] Something akin to this revival was found in most of Europe, in reaction to the tyranny of Napoleon and the principles of the revolution which had produced him.[6] The question naturally arises whether the Secession resulting from these conditions owed anything to a democratic spirit. The question is the more interesting because of a possible analogy to the Eighty Years' War, in which religious and patriotic motives were intimately associated. Some such democratic influence may have played a part in the Secession. We must conclude, however, that the religious motives were primary, because the despotic reorganization of the church was quite peaceably accepted until the full implications for religion were felt and seen. This lay opposition to the ecclesiastical changes contained the seeds of the Secession of 1834.

The leaders of the Secession, however, were a group of young ministers who received their training amid this atmosphere of resistance. The names of the seven outstanding leaders are; Hendrik De Cock, H. P. Scholte, A. Brummelkamp, S. Van Velzen, A. C. Van Raalte, F.

3. Ibid., p. 80.
4. Ibid.
5. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, translated by a joint committee of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America (Grand Rapids, 1943), pp. 8 f.
6. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 80.

Gezelle Meerburg, and Louis Baehler.[7] These men were directly indebted to the Reveil. The Dutch poets, Wm. Bilderdijk and Isaac Da Costa, were influential in organizing a discussion club at the University of Leyden. The club was called the "Scholte Club" from the name of its leader, and consisted of Brummelkamp, Meerburg, Van Velzen, and Van Raalte. These men met together for discussion of religious matters and for mutual encouragement. The views of the Reveil, mediated through Bilderdijk and Da Costa, strongly influenced them.[8] Close contact with a revival in Switzerland and the profound religious experiences of some of their members also contributed to their reforming zeal.[9]

The broad theological differences between the seceders and the Establishment were all concerned with defections of the Establishment from the positions adopted at the Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619. They included liberalizing of doctrine, relaxation of standards of membership, the interpretation of the Formula of Subscription as a mere expression of personal loyalty to the creeds, and the introduction of hymns which were doctrinally unsound according to the traditional standards. The imposition of politically-inspired rules was itself a departure from the old position. Furthermore, the spirit of the leaders of the secession was characterized by a deeper religious fervor than that manifested by their colleagues in the Establishment. This difference may be symbolized by the case of Hendrik De Cock, who underwent a profound conversion experience after he was in the ministry. The differences may be further noted by a review of the experiences of the individual leaders.

The immediate occasion for the Secession of 1834 was the suspension of De Cock from his ministerial office. Two offenses were charged to him: publication of a pamphlet against two brother ministers in answer to a pamphlet which they had published, and writing a preface to a layman's pamphlet against the use of hymns.[10] The National Synod and the Provincial Board concurred in his suspension for two years with loss of salary. H. P. Scholte was the next man to be disciplined. He had placed himself under suspicion by objecting to certain elements in

7. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, pp. 8 f.
8. Ibid.
9. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 81.
10. Ibid., p. 82.

the Form for the Lord's Supper and the use of hymns, but no grounds for disciplinary action could be found in his attitude in these matters. But when De Cock was suspended at Ulrum, Scholte visited him, and preached for him against the advice of the counsellor for Ulrum. For this cause, Scholte's own Classical Board suspended him. As a result of these disciplinary proceedings, the Ulrum consistory seceded on October 13 and 14, 1834, and Scholte and his church also decided to secede.[11]

Brummelkamp's deposition, in 1835, was the result of a determined effort to that end by the Provincial Board. Under existing laws, he could not be punished for his refusal to baptize children of non-confessing members and to have hymns sung in public worship. The Provincial Board, however, asked him for a statement of his reasons for refusal to use the hymns. When he complied, they found his reasons insulting to those who had collected the hymns, the ministers who were using them, the Synods which had introduced them, and the Boards which were enforcing their use.[12] He was deposed upon these grounds.

The other leaders of the secession were disciplined upon similar grounds. After successfully passing his examinations, Van Raalte was barred from the ministry for his refusal to give an extraordinary promise to obey the Synodical laws. Van Velzen was involved in difficulties concerning the use of hymns, and the Classical Board demanded a pledge of his submission to the church regulations. He offered such a promise only insofar as those regulations were in agreement with the Forms of Unity. His suspension followed.[13]

We have presented this brief description of the reasons for secession in order to give some indication of the nature and spirit of the movement. The leaders of the secession interpreted it as a separation, not from the Church, but from errors within the Church.[14] The declaration of secession of Scholte's church states that the secession is not from Reformed doctrine, liturgy, or government, or from the Reformed Church, but from the un-Reformed church boards.[15] The expressed intention is to adhere to the Scriptures and the Forms of Unity. The seceders further expressed their willingness to rejoin the body which

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 83.
13. Ibid., pp. 83 f.
14. Cf. a letter written to the Netherlands in 1872 by A. C. Van Raalte. In Van Raalte Collection.
15. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 86. The other documents of the Secession agree on this point.

they had left if its members would join them in rejecting all that was out of harmony with God's Word and the Forms of Unity which agree with that Word. One by one the other deposed ministers and their congregations joined De Cock and his group in their secession. Other sympathizers within and beyond the same province took the same step. In comparison with the membership of the State Church, however, the seceding group remained numerically small. At the time the first seceder Synod met in Amsterdam in 1836, the membership of the new church numbered a mere 4,000.[16]

The Secession of 1834 was an expression of an orthodox spirit, inasmuch as orthodoxy means holding to an established pattern.[17] The occasions for deposition and secession occurred when the actions of the reorganized Church were found to be out of harmony with the creeds to which all of its ministers had subscribed.[18] Furthermore, the secession itself was not, strictly speaking, a willful act. It followed the determined effort on the part of Classical, Provincial, and Synodical Boards to enforce their autocratic authority. It was the objection of ministers and people to the attempted interference with the expression of their sincere convictions and historic faith. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that no break with the Church, but the purity of the Church was desired. The movement embodied the conception of the true Church as defined not by politically-inspired organization, but by adherence to the faith handed down from the fathers. When that faith could no longer be propagated in the fellowship and under the organization of the State Church, that fellowship and organization had to be rejected in the interests of the faith.

The seceders found themselves without legal standing under the laws

16. P. Van Tuinen, "The Spiritual Legacy of 1847," in **The Young Calvinist**, Vol. XXVIII, no. 11 (November, 1947), p. 30.

17. Webster defines the word "orthodox" as meaning "sound in opinion or doctrine, especially in religious doctrine; hence, specifically, holding to the Christian faith as formulated in the great Church creeds and confessions."
Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Fifth Edition, p. 701.

18. "The grounds for the Secession movement as given by De Cock and his followers are chiefly these five:
1) A falling away from the pure doctrine of the Reformed Church, as expressed in its standards.
2) A hierarchical form of church government and arbitrary regulations.
3) The introduction of unsound hymns.
4) A new and dubious-sounding formula of subscription. Reformed doctrine was to be taught not because (quia) but in so far (quatenus) as it was contained in the Word of God.
5) Unfaithfulness of preachers regarding their ordination vows."
Henry Beets, **The Christian Reformed Church in North America** (Grand Rapids: Eastern Ave. Book Store, 1923), p. 21.

of the land as interpreted by the constituted authorities. The constitutional freedom of religion was interpreted as applying only to those denominations which were in existence at the time the Constitution was written.[19] Governmental reaction to the secession was not slow in making itself felt. The seceding congregations were deprived of their property. Troops were quartered among the seceders, ostensibly to prevent riots arising from opposition to their meetings. This action rather occasioned than prevented such disturbances, with the troops sometimes joining the rabble in fomenting disorder. Fines were imposed upon the seceders for holding unauthorized meetings. The humble means of the church members were often insufficient for the payment of these fines, in which case sheriff's auctions of their possessions were decreed.[20] Several of the leaders suffered imprisonment for failure to pay fines or for other causes.[21]

This persecution was relatively short-lived, and was only indirectly the cause of the emigration of some of the seceders to America. The economic aspects of the persecution resulted in the further impoverishment of the seceders, who came originally from the poorer classes of the people. At the same time, financial obligations were increasing. A great public debt resulted in a heavy burden of taxation upon the people. A potato famine raised the price of this staple article of their diet to unprecedented heights.[22] These financial considerations led to a diligent search for relief. Added to this, the progressive dechristianization of the schools aroused grave concern in the minds of the earnestly religious people.[23]

When financial and social considerations[24] had driven the seceders to consider emigration, the question remained where the new home was to be sought. Two locations were suggested, the first being a colony in

19. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 89.

20. Ibid., pp. 89 f.

21. For an example of such imprisonment and other indignities suffered by one of the leaders, see H. E. Dosker, Levensschets Van Dr. A. C. Van Raalte (Nijkerk, Holland, 1893), pp. 39-42.

22. Ibid., pp. 57 f.

23. "Prof. Henry Lucas of the University of Washington, who has made an intensive study of the problem, states that the causes of the migration were: first, the ecclesiastical discontent; secondly, the inability to educate their children in their own Christian schools; thirdly, the general unfavorable economic conditions; and fourthly, successive failures of the potato crop."
A. Vanden Bosch, The Dutch Communities of Chicago (Chicago: Knickerbocker Society, 1927), p. 9.

24. Albert Hyma, Albertus C. Van Raalte and His Dutch Settlements in the United States (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), p. 52.

Java. The attention of Brummelkamp and Van Raalte was drawn to America by a schoolmaster who visited them while on his way to the United States. He showed them letters from former acquaintances of theirs who had moved to America, which reflected conditions far above their dreams of that little-known land.[25] These two men and others proceeded to make plans for emigration. Among the documents which they drew up was one entitled, "Principles of the Society for the Dutch Emigration to the United States of North America."[26] It became apparent that religious freedom would not be guaranteed by going to Java. All eyes therefore were fixed upon the United States.

Brummelkamp and Van Raalte then proceeded to write a general epistle, "To the Believers in the United States of North America," dated May 25, 1846.[27] In this letter they gave a brief description of the secession and the difficulties under which the seceders were living, asking help for those who might desire to go to America but lacked the means.[28] Because the writers knew of no address to which to send the letter, they entrusted it to a Mr. Roelof Sleister, a theological student, who was on his way to the United States.[29]

The letter fell into the hands of Dr. I. N. Wyckoff, minister of the Dutch Reformed Church at Albany, New York. He translated it and published it in the *Christian Intelligencer,* October 15, 1846.[30] As a result, the "Protestant Evangelical Dutch Emigrants' Society" was organized, with Dr. Thomas De Witt as its representative in New York City.[31] These two men, Wyckoff and De Witt, were to prove true friends in need to the emigrants. Up to this time none of the leaders of the secession had themselves planned to emigrate. But in a struggle of the soul during a siege of illness, Van Raalte decided to cast his lot with the emigrants, much to the astonishment of his colleagues.[32] Van Raalte left Holland on October 2, 1846, arriving in New York on November 17th. He was cordially received, first by Dr. De Witt in New York City, and later by Dr. Wyckoff in Albany.

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25. Dosker, op. cit., p. 58.
26. Hyma, op. cit., p. 44.
27. Ibid., p. 54.
28. Dosker, op. cit., p. 62.
29. Ibid., p. 64.
30. Hyma, op. cit., p. 58.
31. Ibid., p. 57.
32. Dosker, op. cit., pp. 63 ff.

The story of the trip to Michigan and attempts to find a suitable site for settlement there has been well told.[33] Most of it need not be retold here. Suffice it to say that near the end of January, 1847, Van Raalte decided that the mouth of the Black River, in Western Michigan, was the site most suitable for the colony which he hoped to found. By the middle of February enough of his followers had arrived so that the work of building could be begun. The first houses of the city of Holland began to take shape. Here Van Raalte hoped to put into effect his cherished ideals.

The pioneers of the colony had taken religious matters into due consideration. Van Raalte and Brummelkamp, in their "Principles of the Society for the Dutch Emigration to the United States of North America," had included Article 7 as follows:

> The first consideration is to make the Colony a Christian community, for which reason the Commission must take care in accepting suitable candidates for emigration and in helping them to reach their destination, in order that these persons become a salting salt in the Colony and form a Christian majority among the population. For that reason only Christians will be accepted of whom we may expect that they will gladly submit themselves to the Word of God, in order that not only a Christian church government, but also a Christian civil government shall be established. This will have as its task the execution of God's commandment, which is the basis of every state.[34]

A measure of continuity was preserved with church life in the Netherlands. Besides Dr. Van Raalte, three other ministers accompanied the settlers, as pastors of definite groups. They were the Revs. C. Van der Meulen, M. A. Ypma, and S. Bolks. Those who had been elders or deacons in the Netherlands at the time of departure continued to exercise their office in whatever settlements became their new homes.[35]

As early as possible, the religiously minded settlers met together in a Classical Assembly. The first such meeting was held in the village of Zeeland on April 23, 1848.[36] Three ministers were present and four consistories represented. From that time onward, Classis Holland met in regular sessions twice a year. The religious concern of these people is reflected in the proceedings of this Classis in an interesting

33. For an excellent, well-documented account, see Hyma, op. cit., pp. 63-110.
34. Hyma, op. cit., p. 44.
The provision for a Christian Civil government was carried out only within the limits of the village of Holland. A "theocracy" in the sense of that found in the Puritan settlements was unknown in the Michigan settlement. The idea expressed should not be construed as that of ecclesiastical domination of the civil government; the ideal was that the holders of civil office should themselves be Christians.
35. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 99.
36. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, p. 18.

way. Two decisions were taken at the first meeting which were to prove sources of trouble later on. We read in Article 8 of the first meeting:

> The question is raised and each one is asked in turn to express his opinion, whether elders and deacons shall retire after two years, or shall be eligible for re-election. . . .
>
> Answer: . . . And as the calling and election of God are without repentance, therefore it is judged that elders and deacons should serve as long as their powers of body and mind are equal to the task; unless some one makes himself unworthy of the office.[37]

One can understand the necessity of making the most of good elder material in the wilderness; but this departure from the Church Order of Dort was displeasing to some of the members of the colony.

Another decision subject to later controversy concerned the feast-days, commemorating the birth, passion, and death of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The value of speaking on these precious themes was admitted by all. But it was successfully argued that the Word did not give full certainty as to the exact dates involved, and that the subjects could just as well be treated on Sabbath days at certain seasons of the year. The decision adopted advocated the discussion of the great Christian themes without regulation "as to days and time." The reason given for this compromise decision was "that there shall never be any attempt to force the conscience."[38]

The first Classis also discussed the confessional standards of the colony in a highly interesting article. We quote again the minutes of the first meeting:

> Art. 10. The Catechism, Formulas of Concord, Confession of Faith, Canons of Dort, and Church Order were taken up for discussion.
>
> All present declared themselves to be in complete harmony therewith, and were of the opinion that we should make use of these in the ministry, in the same manner as our fathers have described in the preface to the "Kerkelijk Handboekje" (Church Manual), consenting to what we read on pages 42 and 43 concerning ecclesiastical institutions established by the church, with regard to which we find no commandments in the Word of God. As to such things, the Reformed Church has thus far taught, that inasmuch as Christ has set free the Christian from the yoke of ecclesiastical ceremonies, consisting in differences of food, the keeping

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37. Ibid., p. 20.
The original Church Order of Dort had provided that half of the number of elders and deacons should retire each year. The Utrecht revision of the Church Order changes this to provide that elders and deacons should never be removed from office during good behavior. The decision of Classis Holland in favor of retention of office was influenced by the fear that good consistory material might be in short supply. Van Raalte later admitted that this decision fostered autocracy at the expense of congregational freedom. Cf. Dosker, op. cit., pp. 96 f.

38. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, p. 21.

> of Festival Days, etc., no one ought to lay upon them again any yoke, or to make them subject to human institutions . . . It is also notable that the Reformed Church has always opposed the Papacy, which misleads people into thinking that their consciences are subject to the orders of the church as well as to God's commandments, that the institutions of the church are necessary to salvation, as well as the commandments of God, and that religion consists as much in the keeping of ecclesiastical regulations as of the divine laws; and has proved out of God's Word, and maintained, that no church commandments bind the consciences of the people, but only the laws of God, etc.
>
> Hence we accept the entire "Kerkelijk Handboekje," with all the Church Orders therein contained (Church Orders of Wesel, 1568, Dortrecht, 1574, Middelburg, 1581, 's Gravenhage, 1586, and Dortrecht, 1619), and declare that the church government expressed therein has our perfect assent, and comprehends the government of the Reformed Church.[39]

This decision of Classis Holland demonstrates the unity of that body with the brethren in the Netherlands, both in the adherence to the historic Reformed standards and in the rejection of human additions and regulations. It is evident that the settlers did not think of their departure from Holland as an ecclesiastical break with the Seceder Church in the Netherlands, a fact further attested by the continuity of office of ministers, elders, and deacons previously mentioned.

But if such continuity existed in their thoughts, the question arises why the standards had to be discussed at all. At best, the relationship of this Classis to the parent church in the Netherlands was anomalous. The Classical Minutes make no mention of the question whether this Classis considered itself a part of that church. The isolated position in the wilderness and the difficulty of maintaining close contact with the Netherlands must have given rise to some feelings of independence.

If ecclesiastical ties with the Netherlands were somewhat tenuous, a new ecclesiastical fellowship was beginning to take shape. Mention has already been made of the help given to the immigrants by members of the Dutch Reformed Church in America. In the minutes of the Classical Assembly of September 27, 1848, we read of a further concern for the new-comers:

> Art. 8. By Rev. Van der Meulen the assembly is informed that an invitation has been received from the Duitsch (Dutch) Church, or the Old Holland Church, to attend their Synodical assemblies. However, although it is acknowledged that we should seek greater intercourse with one another, and that it is a requirement of love to exercise fellowship, nevertheless, at this moment it is difficult to do so, because of the pressure of local business and the difficulties connected with a new settlement.[40]

39. Ibid., pp. 22 f.
40. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, pp. 26 f.

Dr. I. N. Wyckoff, who had befriended the immigrants upon their arrival, continued to show a genuine interest in their welfare. Having attended the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh in 1849 as a fraternal delegate from the Dutch Reformed Church, he was commissioned by the Board of Home Missions to pay a visit to the new settlement in Michigan. His report on this visit is of great importance in the history of the colony. He reports that he was received with great joy by the settlers.[41] A meeting of ministers and consistories was called on June 4, 1849, for the purpose of discussion with him.[42] His report gives the following table of statistics of the congregations:[43]

	Families	Members
1. The Congregation of Holland, Van Raalte	225	250
2. The Congregation of Zeeland, Vander Meulen	175	225
3. The Congregation of Vriesland, Ypma	69	125
4. The Congregation of Overijsel, Bolks	35	80
5. The Congregation of Graafschap	50	100
6. The Congregation of Drenthe	45	79
7. The Congregation of Groningen	30	63

He further reported that the colony directed its attention as far as possible to schools. Holland had a Dutch and an English school,[44] Zeeland had a Dutch school, and the other localities were soon expected to follow suit. The teachers gave instruction in Catechism and Psalm singing as well as reading and writing. When they were not able to catechize once a week, the elder took their place.[45] The financial income of the church was small, since the families had exhausted their funds in the purchase of land.[46]

We reproduce in full the most significant portion of the report:

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41. N. H. Dosker, **De Hollandsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Amerika** (Nijmegen, Holland, 1888), p. 140.

42. **Ibid.**, p. 147.

43. **Ibid.**, p. 148.

44. This English school was probably a public school. Van Raalte complained at one time of a lack of interest of his companions in the instruction given in the public school.
Cf. Hyma, **op. cit.**, p. 186.

45. N. H. Dosker, **op. cit.**, p. 148.

46. The earliest occupation of the settlers was farming, the soil comparing rather unfavorably with that of the Dutch provinces from which they had come. Cf. Hyma, **op. cit.**, p. 170.
"In 1852 Holland possessed seven stores, two hotels, a bakery, shops of a tinsmith, jeweler, tailor, blacksmith, machine maker and wagon maker," a brick factory, two sawmills, and an ashery for making potash and lye.
Cf. Hyma, **op. cit.**, pp. 177 f.

> At the Classical Meeting [47] it was soon made known that the brethren were a little afraid of entering into ecclesiastical connection with us, although they believe in the union of brethren and sigh for Christian sympathy and association. They have so felt to the quick the galling chains of ecclesiastical domination, and have seen with sorrow how exact organization, according to human rules, leads to formality on the one hand, and to the oppression of tender conscience on the other, that they hardly know what to say. I protested, of course, that it was the farthest from our thoughts, to bring them to bondage to men, or to exercise an ecclesiastical tyranny over them. And I stated that they would be most perfectly free, at any time they found an ecclesiastical connection opposed to their religious prosperity and enjoyment, to bid us a fraternal adieu, and be by themselves again.[48]
>
> On comparison of doctrine, a perfect agreement with our standards was found. In the order of their churches, they believe each church and consistory should direct and manage its own concerns; and incline to the idea that an appellate jurisdiction of superior judicatories is not so scriptural as a kind and fraternal conference and advice. Each of their churches appoint as many elders as seem desirable, and they are always in office until they are dismissed as guilty or unworthy, or removed by death. As the result, they agreed, with these explanations, to join our Synod. It was deemed best that they should not merge themselves into our existing Classis of Michigan, but unite as a separate Classis with our Northern Synod. They will, however, correspond with the delegates of our Classis there. To this arrangement I saw no insuperable objections, and I would report the Classis of Holland accordingly.[49]

To come to an understanding of the union thus proposed and decided upon, it is necessary to look into two other matters; the financial assistance granted to the colonists by the Dutch Reformed Church, and the great influence of two individuals, Wyckoff and Van Raalte, in engineering this union.

It is not surprising to learn that the new settlers found themselves in severe financial straits.[50] The trip from the Netherlands to Michigan and the purchase of 3,000 acres of land had exhausted not only the scanty resources of the people, but also the larger sums of money which Van Raalte had brought with him from the Netherlands.[51] In this situation, individuals and organizations within the Dutch Reformed Church rendered much-needed and greatly appreciated assistance. The societies which had been organized to aid the immigrants made sub-

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47. Commentators are agreed that this could not have been a regularly constituted Classical Meeting, since there was no time for proper delegation. Cf. Henry Beets, The Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1946), p. 57.
This is further evident from a report drawn up by the settlers, who did not concede to this meeting the authority of a Classical Assembly.
Cf. Kromminga, op. cit., pp. 103 f.

48. This promise by Dr. Wyckoff was one of the main arguments in defense of the Secession of 1857.

49. N. H. Dosker, op. cit., pp. 149 f.

50. For a description of the difficulties, see H. E. Dosker, op. cit., pp. 88-105.

51. Van Raalte's private sources of income are described in Hyma, op. cit., pp. 120-124.

stantial contributions.[52] Rev. Wyckoff and his congregation at Albany forwarded to Van Raalte a mortgage loan of $1,000.00.[53] Rev. De Witt in New York City also forwarded several loans to Van Raalte.[54] Assistance such as this was certainly not to be lightly regarded. How deeply it impressed Van Raalte is seen from a letter written in 1872, in which he contrasts the neglect of the settlers by the mother church in the Netherlands with the warm Christian welcome found here. According to that letter, the choice facing the settlers was one of life or death. The aid granted by the Dutch Reformed Church was the most concrete manifestation of their Christianity imaginable.[55] Others might later subject the principles of the Dutch Reformed Church to searching and bitter criticism. Van Raalte's sense of gratitude would not permit him to entertain such thoughts.

These two men, Van Raalte and Wyckoff, exerted a tremendous influence in bringing about the union of the settlers with the Dutch Reformed Church. Van Raalte's great influence in the new colony is demonstrated by his biographers and admitted by all. He was leader, pastor, judge, doctor, financier, and father to the colony.[56] In his responsible position he felt most keenly of all the difficulties under which the colony labored and their need for support. He very definitely favored the union. He was the sole representative of the colony at the meeting of the Particular Synod in Albany at which the union was discussed and acted upon.[57]

Wyckoff, on his part, seems to have gone beyond his mandate in offering terms of union to the colonists at the meeting of June 4, 1849. The Particular Synod seems to have been taken somewhat by surprise by the discussion of the matter. As reported by Van Raalte to the Classis of Holland,[58] this body engaged in considerable debate as to the possibility of receiving this classis as an already constituted body and the right of a classis to organize itself as they had done. So difficult was the matter that the acceptance of the settlers by the Particular Synod was provisional, and had to be referred to the General Synod. Of even

52. Ibid., p. 146.
53. Receipt preserved in the Van Raalte family collection.
54. Evidence found in Van Raalte family collection.
55. Letter of 1872 in the Van Raalte family collection.
56. Cf. H. E. Dosker, op. cit., pp. 295-302.
Cf. also Holland City News, Vol. V, No. 38 (November 11, 1876).
57. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, pp. 37 f.
58. Ibid., pp. 38-40.

greater future consequences was the offer by Wyckoff of a fraternal farewell in case the settlers found the union with the Dutch Reformed Church unsatisfactory. There is nothing in Reformed polity to legalize such an offer. No mention of any such offer is made in the record of the official union of the two bodies. It is hard to see in this offer anything but an attempt on the part of Wyckoff to overcome the hesitation of the colonists by a bit of salesmanship which he never expected to be used in later disputes.

The union thus negotiated was ratified at the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in America on June 5, 1850. Thus the Michigan colonists were brought into an ecclesiastical association which the majority of them never left. A minority, however, found the union not to their liking, and after a few years dissolved their connections with the larger ecclesiastical body. Therein lies the actual founding of the Christian Reformed Church in the United States.

The seeds of a future split among the colonists had already been sown before they left the Netherlands. Two of the original leaders of the Secession of 1834 found themselves differing radically as to what course their church should follow in its development. Brummelkamp favored co-operation with the orthodox party which had remained within the Established Church, particularly in such matters as the education of theological students. Van Velzen was in favor of a strictly independent course of action, with stress on developing the Reformed character of the Christian Reformed people themselves. Both men gave publicity to their views, and each gained a following of his own within the church.[59]

The new colony included some followers of each man. The differences which had divided them in the Netherlands were not left behind. Van Raalte even says that those differences were accentuated in this country.[60] Van Raalte, brother-in-law of both Brummelkamp and Van Velzen, was inclined by natural affinity to adopt the viewpoint of the former. Concrete evidence of this is supplied in the record of a collection taken by Van Raalte and sent to Brummelkamp in the interests of his educational projects in the Netherlands.[61] His action in seeking the larger fellowship of the Dutch Reformed Church in

59. Kromminga, op. cit., pp. 97 f.
60. Letter of 1872 in the Van Raalte family collection.
61. Receipt in the Van Raalte family collection.

America is consistent with this attitude. But the presence in the colony of followers of Van Velzen, who believed fervently that an independent development along the historic Reformed lines was the task of the Christian Reformed Church, made a dispute on the matter of union almost inevitable.

Another factor contributing to future trouble was the scanty knowledge which the settlers had of the Dutch Reformed Church at the time of the union. They had, indeed, been informed that the doctrinal standards of the larger body were identical with their own. But beyond that formal introduction they knew little about the spirit and life of that body. Their willingness to join it is therefore the more surprising, since their secession in the Netherlands had been from a church which had departed from the Reformed heritage in its life rather than in its official doctrine. The discussion of the proposed union seems to have been scanty. The meeting with Dr. Wyckoff on June 4, 1849, did not have the status of a classical assembly. The minutes of Classis Holland, on October 31st, 1849, involved no recorded discussion of the union proposal.[62] The records of the Classical meeting of April, 1850, at which Van Raalte was delegated to attend the Particular Synod at Albany, are fragmentary. Due to an illness the minutes themselves are lost. The Rev. S. Bolks, president of that meeting, attempted to make up for that loss in part by communicating "the two following ecclesiastical matters,"[63] of which only one appears. That one matter is a letter to the Particular Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, introducing Van Raalte and empowering him to negotiate the desired union.[64] It is regrettable that no fuller report of the discussion carried on at the Classical meeting is preserved.

The one consideration which seems to have weighed most heavily in favor of the union was the help which had been received from the Dutch Reformed Church. In a later defense of his actions, Dr. Van Raalte mentions three considerations which influenced him. They are the duty of true Christians to seek fellowship with the Church of Christ, the discovery in America of a church with whose doctrinal standards the settlers were in full agreement, and the warm welcome

62. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, pp. 33-35.
63. Ibid., p. 36.
64. Ibid., pp. 36, 37.

which the Dutch Reformed Church had given the immigrants, interpreted as a manifestation of a true Christian spirit.[65]

The value of this attitude is not to be denied. But it is not at all surprising that, considering their background, not all of the settlers were satisfied with this hasty action. Their dissatisfaction was increased and turned into actual suspicion by the arrival of other settlers in the colony. Some of these new arrivals were influenced by two facts: they had not shared the dire need of the early colonists, and therefore were not greatly impressed by the argument from necessity in favor of union; and some of their number had spent some time in the Reformed Church in the East, and had received a disturbing impression of the way in which the Reformed standards were understood and applied there.

One of those later arrivals, in particular, fed the fires of discontent. He was a layman, Gysbert Haan, who was in the East at the time union was being discussed, and arrived in Michigan just after it had been accomplished. He has left a record of his experiences and his accusations against the Dutch Reformed Church.[66] He presents the following accusations against the various Reformed congregations in which he had sojourned. They possessed and used a collection of 800 hymns, one of the abuses against which the leaders of the Netherlands secession had objected. They employed choirs in the churches, which led to the decline of congregational singing. Haan discovered an elder who could not accept the doctrine of election, and an elderly minister who confessed that he had never preached it. There was no catechetical instruction in the church except for some Bible history taught in Sunday School. Many ministers and elders belonged to lodges. One elder in whose home Haan stayed had nine children, not one of whom had been baptized. The elder preferred to allow them to grow up and choose for themselves what they wanted to believe.[67]

It is quite in order to cast some reflection on the accuracy of these charges. On one occasion, Haan misquoted the report of Dr. Wyckoff on its most important point, although according to his own testimony, he possessed a printed copy.[68] On another occasion he made an inaccurate charge concerning the observance of the Lord's Supper in the

65. Letter of 1872 in the Van Raalte family collection.
66. G. Haan, Stem Van Een Belasterden (Grand Rapids: C. Nienhardt, 1871).
67. Ibid., pp. 2 f.
68. Ibid., p. 5.

Dutch Reformed Church, upon evidence which proved to be only hearsay.[69] On the other hand, his charges clearly did carry some weight. That the administration of the Lord's Supper did not proceed strictly according to the rules of closed communion is admitted in the Classical minutes.[70] Nor was Haan alone in his objections to the union. According to his own testimony, when he arrived in Michigan in the summer of 1850, he heard the settlers saying, "Van Raalte has sold us."[71]

Satisfaction with the union had never been complete.[72] Both old and new considerations caused discontent to grow rapidly during the years 1850 to 1857. The classical decisions with regard to life tenure by elders and deacons and the lack of a definite requirement to observe feast days were subjected to severe criticism.[73] A new cause for dispute arose in the recommendation by Van Raalte of Richard Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted,* which critics found to be a book containing Arminian sentiments. It was pointed out at the classis that there were passages in the book in which one could clearly read the doctrine of election, but at the same time it was admitted that there were a few expressions in "the little work of Baxter" which the ministers themselves did not "dare to defend or employ."[74] Questions concerning lodge membership and open communion were also introduced in the Classical meetings.[75]

The result of this agitation was that, at the Classical meeting of April 8th, 1857, four documents of secession were received.[76] They were from the Rev. K. Vanden Bosch, minister at Noordeloos, Rev. H. G. Kleyn, minister at Grand Rapids, the Consistory of Graafschap, and the Consistory of Polkton. With one accord they accuse the larger body, directly or indirectly, of departing from the standpoint which they had jointly held in the Netherlands. The only document which

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69. Cf. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, p. 187.
70. Ibid., p. 180 and note at bottom of page.
71. Haan, op. cit., p. 5.
72. R. T. Kuiper, Een Tijdwoord Betrekkelijk de Kerkelijke Toestanden in Noord-Amerika (Wildervank, Holland, 1882), pp. 13-16.
73. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, pp. 58-60.
74. Ibid., p. 144.
75. Ibid., p. 180.
76. Ibid., pp. 240-245.

specifies the reasons for separation is the letter of the Consistory of Graafschap, which lists the following reasons:

> 1. The collection of 800 hymns, introduced contrary to the church order.
>
> 2. Inviting men of all religious views to the Lord's Supper, excepting Roman Catholics.
>
> 3. Neglecting to preach the catechism regularly, to hold catechetical classes, and to do house visitation.
>
> 4. That no religious books are circulated without the consent of other denominations, directing your attention to the Sabbath booklet, with the practice by J. Vander Meulen in 1855.
>
> 5. And what grieves our hearts most in all of this is that there are members among you who regard our secession in the Netherlands as not strictly necessary, or think that it was untimely.
>
> 6. In the report of Rev. Wyckoff, he gives us liberty to walk in this ecclesiastical path.[77]

It is of especial interest to note in this case how the seceders called upon the report of Dr. Wyckoff for justification. The other documents are not so specific, but speak in general terms of the errors into which the church has fallen and the dangers which lie in wait for it in the future.

These documents were received with regret by Classis Holland and placed on file as notification.[78] The Secession of 1857 was now an accomplished fact. The Rev. Kleyn returned to Classis Holland and was received again into its bosom at the meeting of September 9th, 1857.[79] This left the seceding churches with only one minister, the Rev. K. Vanden Bosch. Nevertheless, they organized themselves into a classis, numbering five churches, and held their first classical meeting on October 7th, 1857.[80] This was the actual origin of the Christian Reformed Church in America.

The two opposing parties thus formed agreed in principle and disagreed in interpretation on two important questions. The first was the question of the right of the Church to secede. The second was the question as to how far the Dutch Reformed Church embodied the ideals which the settlers sought to realize in their new home. As to the first question, the common origin of these two bodies in the Netherlands Secession of 1834 made some measure of agreement

77. Ibid., p. 242.
78. Ibid., p. 243.
79. Ibid., pp. 252-254.
80. Synodical Minutes Christian Reformed Church 1857-1880 (Grand Rapids, 1937, mimeographed and bound), p. 1. The five churches were Grand Rapids, Vriesland, Noordeloos, Graafschap, and Grand Haven, all in Michigan.

inevitable. Both parties concurred in the judgment that the true Church must secede when its purity is at stake. If it is impossible to maintain purity of doctrine and life in the face of errors in a larger fellowship, that fellowship must be renounced. The difference between the two American groups came in the application of this standard to the union with the Dutch Reformed Church. The presence of errors in practice in that church was admitted by almost all of the disputants. But the objectionable character of those practices was minimized by the one party and emphasized by the other. It is questionable whether even the most radical of the seceders would have considered the objections weighty enough for secession if the union of 1850 had been considered fully legal and binding. But the objections to continued union centered upon that very point. The attitude of the seceders was that if they had known the character of the Dutch Reformed Church better, they would never have joined it. Furthermore, the promise by Dr. Wyckoff concerning a fraternal adieu, unqualified though he was to make such a promise, seemed to give them a loophole for separating their connection with the church which they had joined.

We do not consider it within our province to determine whether this secession was justified or not. Our interest is to determine what it tells us of the character of the Christian Reformed Church in its origin. The very term by which the act of separation is known is the subject of some difference of opinion. Classis Holland unhesitatingly terms it a secession,[81] as do Prof. Kromminga[82] and Dr. Hyma.[83] But Dr. Beets speaks of "notices of withdrawal" instead of acts of secession and of the "return of 1857" instead of the secession of that year.[84] We must concur in calling the movement a secession, in view of the fact that the formal legality of the union of 1850 is beyond serious question. The propriety and wisdom of the union are the real questions in dispute. They are good examples of the historical factors which characteristically complicate the union and separation of denominations.

If we find some separatist tendencies among the founders of the Christian Reformed Church, that discovery need cause no surprise.

81. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, p. 240.
82. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 111.
83. Hyma, op. cit., p. 215.
84. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church (1946 ed.), pp.60, 62.

Their predecessors in the Netherlands had judged secession to be the only alternative to the loss of their convictions. Dr. Wyckoff, in his report on the colony in 1849, had noted some tendencies to independent action in the colony as a whole.[85] The decisions of the first session of Classis Holland relative to feast days and tenure of church office[86] had manifested an independent spirit with respect to the Church Order. The leader of another party of immigrants, Rev. H. P. Scholte, had organized a strictly independent church after his arrival in Pella, Iowa, in 1847.[87] Several congregations had left the fellowship of the Dutch Reformed Church to join other denominations even before the Secession of 1857.[88]

If we grant the tendency to separation among the founders of the Christian Reformed Church, we ought also to recognize their desire to be consistent. They feared that what had been gained in the Netherlands was about to be lost in America through union with an impure church. This involves us immediately in the second question which we mentioned. Did the Dutch Reformed Church embody the ideals which the settlers sought to realize in their new home? Propagandists for the separated parties differed widely in their interpretations of that church. Quite obviously, the grounds for secession from this church were not identical with those involved in the Secession of 1834. In this American church there was no imposition of a revised polity and no tampering with the doctrinal standards by the civil government as there had been in the Netherlands. The founding of the Dutch Reformed Church in America antedated the reorganization of the Netherlands State Church in 1816. No valid objections could therefore be raised against the doctrine or polity of the church with which the union had been made.

The criticisms were rather against the practice of the Dutch Reformed Church as it was reported by those who had observed it in the East and as it was beginning to manifest itself in the West. Some of the errors noted were similar to those which had caused trouble in the Netherlands, e.g., the introduction of hymns and the neglect of catechism preaching. Others, such as the neglect of the doctrine of election

85. Supra, p. 28.
86. Supra, p. 25.
87. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 100.
88. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, pp. 132-138.

and the circulation of Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted,* seemed to threaten the introduction of the Arminianism against which the Dutch fathers had so consistently warned. It may be that the objectors overemphasized the importance of these things. If so, it must be remarked that in so doing they were merely reflecting and echoing the instruction which they had received in the preaching of their own pastors. It must further be remarked that Van Raalte and his followers consistently minimized the dangers and errors and sometimes ignored them completely.[89]

The answer to the question how well the Dutch Reformed Church met the settlers' ideals must depend on the standards by which the individual judges and the requirements which he lays down for the fulfillment of the ideals. Van Raalte and his party recorded a favorable impression of the Dutch Reformed Church, judging in the light of doctrinal standards and Reformed polity, and the truly Christian generosity which had been offered. The seceders, suspicious of all corrupting influences, a bit bewildered by this great new world, and remembering the signs of decay in the Netherlands State Church, found the association with the American church unprofitable and fraught with danger, and proceeded to dissolve it.[90]

In this discussion of the background and origin of the Christian Reformed Church we can find certain elements which characterized that body from the beginning. Predominant among those characteristics is an overwhelming desire to be orthodox. In the opinion of the founders of the Christian Reformed Church the doctrinal standards of the true Church must be the historic standards of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands; the polity must be that of the Church Order of Dort; and furthermore, the application of these standards to the life of the church must be in keeping with the highest traditions of the Reformed fathers in the Netherlands from the earliest synods to the reorganization of the church in 1816.

The defense of this orthodoxy was seen as the task of laymen as well as of ordained leaders. The original opposition to the reorganization of the Dutch Church came from laymen. The leaders of the Secession of 1834 gained the immediate support of their congregations. When,

89. Cf. the lodge membership question. **Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858**, p. 144.
90. Cf. J. H. Kromminga, "Van Raalte and the Union with the Reformed Church," in **The Calvin Forum**, Vol. XII, no. 11 (June-July, 1947), pp. 238-240.

in America, the leaders were suspected of weakening in their adherence to the cherished principles for the sake of expediency, it was thought necessary to renounce their fellowship as well as that of the church into which they had led their people. We ought also to mention once again that at least some of the leaders of this secession were men who had not shared the hardships of the earliest colonization and hence were not inclined to union as were the original settlers.

This orthodoxy in doctrine and practice was a possession so precious that it was considered worth purchasing at the cost of ecclesiastical fellowship and at the risk of being classed as separatists. It would be impossible to deny the latter classification entirely, since the Christian Reformed Church was born of two secessions within the space of twenty-three years. Yet the nature of that separatism must be carefully noted. It was not the rabid separatism of the single congregation which prefers to be by itself, but that of a Reformed group which earnestly sought fellowship with those who were of a like mind and spirit, organizing itself at first into a classis and later into classes and a synod. Nor was it separatism for the sake of a new and radical idea, but rather in defense of a historic standpoint which was thought to be seriously threatened.

The choice to be independent rather than to perpetuate any corrupting associations had an important by-product. As a result of this choice, the Christian Reformed Church became very definitely a minority group. The group which seceded in 1834 was a very small minority of the Netherlands Reformed Church, and the group which seceded in 1857 contained likewise only a small proportion of the Michigan colony. That fact was not lost upon the latter group of seceders. One of the acts of secession of 1857 reads in part as follows:

> Brethren, ministers of the gospel, we are together ministers of the secession, in so far as your overseers in the midst of you walked in that same path with us in the Netherlands. Yea, we were separated from all Protestant denominations. Brethren, I exhort you in love not to lose this your character. The Church, the Bride of Christ, is a garden enclosed, a well shut up, a fountain sealed.[91]

This existence as a distinct minority served to increase the self-consciousness of the church and tended to the retention of its orthodoxy, as we shall note more specifically in the following chapters.

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91. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, p. 241.

We find, then, that the Christian Reformed Church was composed of people who desired, above all else, to be orthodox. In their case the term "orthodoxy" must be interpreted as an adherence, in letter and spirit, to the Reformed confessional standards and polity. At least in its early beginnings, this conception of orthodoxy must also include the rejection of everything that smacked of innovation. It is in this sense and for the above historical reasons that we speak of the orthodox start of the Christian Reformed Church. The following chapters will trace the impact of this position upon the American environment and the effects of the environment upon it.

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The Christian Reformed Church was born of two secessions within the space of twenty-three years. The first came in 1834 in the Netherlands, when certain leaders and their congregations became convinced that the State Church had departed or was departing from the Reformed standards. Members of the seceding group emigrated to the United States in 1846, settled in Michigan in 1847, and joined the Dutch Reformed Church in 1850. A small portion of the group seceded from the Dutch Reformed Church in 1857, for reasons somewhat similar to those underlying the Secession of 1834. This small group constituted the Christian Reformed Church in America.

CHAPTER II

Interest in Theological Discussion

The denominational consciousness noted above[1] was very effectively maintained during the ensuing years. One important means of preserving that consciousness and perpetuating the interest in theological orthodoxy was a lively theological discussion which took shape soon after the organization of the Christian Reformed Church. This interest in theological discussion was maintained at a high level for a period of fifty years. We shall describe that interest and its influence upon the orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church.

The discussion of this subject will take us up to the period of the first World War. Christian Reformed writers have noted a decline of interest in theological discussion after that time, probably due in large measure to advancing Americanization. What remained of this interest after that time was decidedly different in character. The later discussions were far less limited to Dutch co-religionists in Holland and America. They were less concerned with defining and establishing the character of the Christian Reformed Church than with defending and preserving it. They will be discussed in Chapter III, "Enforcement of Orthodoxy by Ecclesiastical Action."

The interest of the Christian Reformed people in the discussion of theological subjects was part of the heritage which they had received from their background in the Netherlands. The Dutch discussed theology in their characteristically thorough and painstaking way. They made some notable contributions to theology, both within and outside of the stream of Reformed orthodoxy. The leaders and members of the Christian Reformed Church in America and its parent organization in the Netherlands shared this predilection for theological discussion. Their interest extended to subjects of all classifications. The discussion could on occasion concern very abstract subjects. The debate

1. Supra, p. 38.

on the subject of supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism which aroused considerable interest in the Netherlands is an extreme example of such theological abstraction. But practical matters, such as the discussion of duelling, swearing, or temperance, also aroused interest. Sometimes the discussion probed into fundamental theological questions, such as the doctrine of predestination on which Calvinism is so definite. At other times it could become almost scholastic in its attention to detail.

It is worthy of special note that this interest was shared in a very full measure by the laymen; not the lay leaders only, but the rank and file of the membership of the church. This statement need not cause surprise. We have noted that the Dutch laymen were keenly interested in the philosophy and implications of the reorganization of the Dutch State Church.[2] The persecution which followed the Secession of 1834 and the subsequent emigration served to increase this interest in theological matters. The further secession in 1857 was in large part a reaction of laymen against the union fostered by their leaders.[3] It is to be expected that people involved in such a series of ecclesiastical changes should be well versed and vitally interested in the theological issues involved.

This interest in theological subjects and denominational affairs was of such importance as to be the dominant interest in many homes. In some cases it was the exclusive intellectual interest. As one writer puts it:

> The happenings within the denomination and the discussions in *De Wachter* were the dominant issues within the home and the friendly circle. In many cases a secular newspaper was taboo, and there was no knowledge of world happenings besides what *De Wachter* and other papers of a semi-religious nature would state. Hence the denomination was a little world in which our people lived. The outlook of our people upon religion was chiefly a doctrinal one.[4]

The attitude of the leaders in their preaching and writing was designed to encourage and foster this interest. Almost all of the sermonic utterances were doctrinally based, even when they concerned matters of practice rather than theory. One sermon every Lord's Day was based on a theme from the Heidelberg Catechism. The discussion of those doctrinal subjects was very painstaking and thorough, and at

2. Supra, p. 18.
3. Supra, p. 37
4. Rev. W. Groen in The Banner, September 13, 1935. Quoted in Beets, The Christian Reformed Church, 1946 ed., p. 85.

times quite abstract. The audiences were accustomed by long and faithful attendance upon church services to grasp and enjoy such sermons. The system of catechetical instruction, which we shall discuss in Chapter V, trained the people in the understanding and appreciation of doctrinal themes from childhood onward.

An important role in fostering the interest in theological discussion was played by the Dutch-language newspapers. Outstanding among these was the official publication of the church, *De Wachter,* which found its way into the majority of Christian Reformed homes. A large proportion of this paper was devoted to doctrinal instruction, either through formal educational articles or debates on matters of theological controversy. The size of this proportion can be illustrated by two random selections. *De Wachter* of September 16, 1875, contains a total of twenty columns of material. Of these, two columns are devoted to a meditation on a Scriptural theme. Two columns deal with a practical matter, the relationship of pastor to congregation. Slightly more than one column is given to editorial comment on news items from the Netherlands. Ten full columns deal with various doctrinal matters. The rest of the paper is given to stories, anecdotes, and announcements.[5] Twenty years later, September 18, 1895, the division is as follows: two columns are devoted to a meditation, three to matters of church order, six to news of other churches, mission matters, etc., and six to doctrinal instruction.[6] The treatment of favorite doctrinal themes was very exhaustive. For example, a discussion of justification by faith continued through thirteen numbers of *De Wachter* and covered thirty columns of the paper.[7] Many other examples of such long-drawn-out explanations could be cited.

Besides the educational articles on doctrinal themes, *De Wachter* devoted a good deal of space to debates on controversial questions. Some of these debates were between leaders within the Christian Reformed Church, in which case both sides were presented in full in *De Wachter.* In many important instances, however, the debates were between writers in *De Wachter* and opponents in other Dutch-language newspapers, in which case the opponent's argument was printed in full

5. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 13.
6. De Wachter, Vol. XXVIII, no. 30.
7. De Wachter, Vol. XIII, no. 13 (August 12, 1880) and following numbers.

or summarized before the reply was given. A discussion of the most important debates will be presented later in this chapter.

Although *De Wachter,* as the official organ of the Christian Reformed Church, is the most important for our purposes, a word ought to be said concerning the other Dutch-language newspapers appearing in the United States. Dr. H. Beets presents a list of such papers in *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan.*[8] He lists the following, some of which had suspended publication at the time he wrote: *Sheboygan Niewsblad; Ebenezer; Niewsbode; De Hollander; De Paarl; De Wekker; De Verzamelaar; De Hope; De Grondwet;*[9] *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan; Gereformeerd Maandblat; Stem Uit het Westen; De Heraut; De Volksstem; Ons Vaandel; Voorwarts; De Stoompost; De Lantaarn; De Vrijheidsbanier; De Christen Werkman; Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente; Kerkbode; De Gids; De Getuige; De Schoolbel; De Geestelijke Wandelaar; De Standaard; De Calvinist; Het Ideaal; De Huisvriend; De Hollandsche Farmer; De Boodschapper; De Hollandsche Amerikaan; De Volksvriend; De Nederlander; Onze Toekomst; Pella's Weekblad; De Uitdeeler; De Christelijke Heraut; De Vrije Hollander; Sioux Center Niewsblad; De Telegraaf; Het Oosten; De Heidenwereld.* Some of these numerous papers were short-lived, several appearing for the space of only two years. Others, however, are still published today. Some were devoted to specific causes, e.g. free silver, socialism, the Democratic Party, the Republican Party. More were published in Michigan than in any other state, but others came from Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and New Jersey.

Two of these periodicals merit special mention. *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan* (The Reformed American) was a monthly, published from 1897 to 1917. The announced purpose of the publication was to further the Americanization of the immigrant Dutchmen while at the same time preserving their Reformed character. Its editors declared that in the midst of American Methodism, Arminianism, and Universalism, the true Reformed faith was altogether too weakly represented. Their concern was to see to it that the Christian Reformed Church

8. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XX, no. 12 (December, 1916), pp. 514 ff.
9. "De Grondwet, started in 1860 by J. Roost, with M. Hoogesteger as editor. The paper has remained Republican to the present time, and is the largest of the Dutch papers in the U. S., appearing each week with 12 to 16 and sometimes more pages. During the editorship of Verwey and Uden Masman excellent Dutch was used in De Grondwet. Although the newspaper is neutral in religious matters, the contributed articles show plainly that by far the greater number of its readers are orthodox Protestants." Ibid.

supplied this lack, thus benefitting both their church and its American environment.[10] With most of the leaders of the Christian Reformed Church on its list of contributors, this periodical was during its existence second only to *De Wachter* in expressing the position of that church.

The other periodical to which a special word must be devoted was *De Hope.* This weekly newspaper was the official organ of the western section of the Reformed Church in America. Therefore it occupied a position greatly similar to that of *De Wachter,* and the two papers consistently reflected each other's content. Many of the debates appearing in *De Wachter* were occasioned by articles or remarks appearing in *De Hope.*

The close contact between the groups represented by *De Wachter* and *De Hope* was of the greatest significance in stimulating theological discussion. The earliest settlements were concentrated in the vicinity of Holland and Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rival congregations sprang up side by side in those localities, and later in other sections of the Midwest, particularly in the Chicago area and in central and northwestern Iowa. The daily contact of the members of these two groups was very close. They were neighbors in town and farm communities. Frequently they transacted business with each other, and sometimes co-operated in community enterprises. It was natural that the points of difference between them were the subject of constant discussion, both formal and informal. The daily contact of the Dutch members of the Reformed Church in America with the members of the Christian Reformed Church was much closer than that with the Eastern section of their own denomination. As a result, the basic issues were kept very much alive in the minds and conversations of the people.

This situation is reflected not only in the periodicals, but in various books published by the rival groups. Several can be mentioned which defended the position of the Reformed Church. Henry E. Dosker, *Levensschets van Dr. A. C. Van Raalte,* is as much polemical against the Christian Reformed Church as it is biographical of the immigrant leader. Other works defending the position of the Reformed group are N. H. Dosker, *De Hollandsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Amerika,* A. Koppenaal, *Toelichting in Zake den Kerkelijken Strijd in Noord-*

10. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I, no. 1 (March, 1897), pp. 1-5.

Amerika,[11] De Bey and Zwemer, *Stemmen uit de Hollandsche Gereformeerde Kerk,*[12] and W. O. Van Eyck, *Landmarks of the Reformed Fathers.*[13] Of the works defending the position of the Christian Reformed Church we may mention three; R. T. Kuiper, *Een Tijdwoord Betrekkelijk de Kerkelijke Toestanden in Noord-Amerika,* G. K. Hemkes, *Rechtsbestaan der Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk in Amerika,*[14] and H. Van der Werp, *Outline of the History of the Christian Reformed Church in America.*[15]

There was an ulterior motive in much of this controversial writing. Each group desired to gain its full share of adherents among the immigrants coming from the Netherlands. Much of the controversy was intended to influence the parent church in the Netherlands in favor of one group or the other. The approval of writers and leaders in the Netherlands on various points of dispute or on the whole position of the one church or the other was eagerly sought. This was particularly true of the question of the right of the Christian Reformed Church to secede, and of the freemasonry question which later became the leading issue between the churches.

The progress made in this respect by the Christian Reformed Church in the space of a few years may be traced by a glance at relevant articles in *De Wachter.* In an early article, a writer notes that many immigrants from the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands are joining the Dutch Reformed Church in America. He deplores that fact in a letter to the Christian Reformed Church in Holland, and asks that the people be better informed as to the facts.[16] In the communications of the rival group with Holland, the Reformed Church in America claims to represent the seceders (of 1834) in America, and considers the Christian Reformed Church an illegitimate body.[17] *De Wachter* for March 25, 1880, reflects a high point in the controversy, with seven of its twenty columns devoted to the reaction in the Netherlands to occurrences here.[18] Comments from both sides of the Atlantic in favor of each party are quoted in that issue of the paper. A year later it is remarked that the Christian Reformed Church in the Nether-

11. Published by Rook and Bosgraaf, Chicago, Ill., 1894.
12. Published in Groningen, Holland, 1871.
13. Published in Grand Rapids, 1922.
14. Published by Langereis and Hemkes, Grand Rapids, 1893.
15. Published by H. Holkeboer, Holland, Michigan, 1898.
16. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 2 (April 15, 1875), p. 2.
17. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 21 (January 6, 1876), p. 4.
18. De Wachter, Vol. XIII, no. 1, pp. 3 f.

lands was reluctant at first to recognize the validity of the Secession of 1857, but that relations are now improving.[19] A little later, the attitude of the church in the Netherlands to the Christian Reformed Church in America is seen as positively favorable.[20] Finally it is noted that the Dutch people deem the separation justified because of Dr. Wyckoff's instructions in his now familiar report, which was duly printed in *De Wachter* with copious comments.[21]

We must present some excerpts from two of the most violent controversies which raged between the two groups. They are the question of the right of the Christian Reformed Church to exist and the dispute over freemasonry. In the first debate, the opening salvo was fired by the Rev. B. De Bey, in behalf of the Reformed Church. He reported a speech by the Rev. Brummelkamp in the Netherlands, in which Mr. Brummelkamp points out that he did not lightheartedly leave the church of the fathers, but was forced out. That this put the Secession of 1857 in an unfavorable light was not left to inference, but clearly stated by Mr. De Bey. *De Wachter* printed both the accusation and a three-column reply.[22] Mr. De Bey and editor G. E. Boer of *De Wachter* continued to exchange open letters on this subject in almost every issue of *De Wachter* for nearly a year.[23]

Presently elder J. Gelock, one of the leaders of the Secession of 1857, joined the controversy. He presented personal reflections on the history of the Christian Reformed Church, and offered his opinion that open communion was the greatest point of difference between the two churches. The practice of the Reformed Church in this respect was thought by him to be valid ground for secession.[24] In the same issue, another writer took the bull by the horns and discussed the perennial question, "Shall we leave an impure church or remain in it to purge it."[25] Concurrently with those more formal discussions, "Jan" and "Hendrik" conversed about the disputed matters in the language of the people, sometimes giving a droll twist to the subject.[26] Although a half year later the conversationalists had become "Johannes" and

19. De Wachter, Vol. XIV, no. 16 (June 30, 1881), p. 1.
20. De Wachter, Vol. XIV, no. 49 (March 2, 1882), p. 1.
21. De Wachter, Vol. XV, no. 4 (April 6, 1882), p. 3.
22. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 20 (December 23, 1875), p. 2.
23. Concluded in De Wachter, Vol. IX, no. 10 (August 3, 1878).
24. De Wachter, Vol. IX, no. 6 (June 8, 1876), p. 3; no. 10 (August 3, 1876), p. 4.
25. De Wachter, Vol. IX, no. 10, p. 1.
26. Ibid., no. 1 (March 30, 1876), p. 2.

"Petrus", the subject matter and manner of treatment remained substantially the same.[27]

A somewhat discordant note was injected into the controversy when a spokesman for the Reformed Church in Lodi, New Jersey, criticized *all* secessions, including that in the Netherlands.[28] But this departure was soon forgotten, and the controversy settled back into its usual channels. It flared anew when a new congregation was formed by the Christian Reformed Church in Roseland, Chicago. "Anti-Schismaticus" in *De Hope* criticized this intrusion, and several articles were devoted to a reply.[29] The charge had already been made a half year earlier that the Christian Reformed home missionaries were encroaching upon the territory of the Reformed Church.[30] Mention of the report of Dr. Wyckoff was prompted by accusations against the Christian Reformed Church made by the Rev. N. H. Dosker in *De Huisvriend*.[31] Finally that report was reprinted in full and commented upon.[32]

The above paragraphs are a fair representation, although by no means the full extent of the controversy. The dispute was still going on in 1894.[33] In some of the issues cited more than one-fourth of the space in *De Wachter* was devoted to this dispute alone. The level on which the controversy was conducted was not always equally high. The open letters exchanged by Mr. De Bey and Mr. Boer were friendly and courteous. But in the renewed exchange prompted by the formation of a new congregation in Roseland, tempers were manifestly hot. In that phase of the controversy, charges of falsification, misrepresentation, and heresy were freely exchanged. The basic dispute was whether to remain in or to leave a church which manifested some defections. In this dispute, the only conclusive results were the intensification of feelings and the deepening of the lines of cleavage between the two groups. For better or for worse, the divisive issues were kept clearly and constantly before the minds of the people.

Somewhat more substantial results were achieved by the debate on the freemasonry question. There was a larger area of agreement between the two groups on this subject. There was little question as

27. Ibid., no. 16 (October 26, 1876), p. 3.
28. De Wachter, Vol. X, no. 15 (October 11, 1877), p. 2.
29. Ibid., nos. 22, 23, 24, 25 (Jan. 17, 1878-Feb. 28, 1878).
30. Ibid., no. 12 (August 30, 1877), p. 1.
31. De Wachter, Vol. XII, no. 4 (May 8, 1879), p. 3.
32. De Wachter, Vol. XIV, nos. 27, 28, 29 (Sept. 22-Oct. 6, 1881).
33. De Wachter, Vol. XXVII, no. 7 (April 11, 1894), pp. 2 f.

to the fundamental opposition between lodge and church. The only difference of opinion concerned the proper treatment of lodge members; should they be disciplined, or tolerated and convinced of their error? The Christian Reformed writers seemed to sense an apologetic approach to this subject on the part of their opponents. They therefore concentrated on it the more readily, perhaps thinking that they had found the Achilles' heel of the opposition.

The occasion for this freemasonry dispute is found in the controversy over the lawful grounds for secession. The editor of *De Wachter* was in the midst of a long series of articles explaining freemasonry and warning against it.[34] But in another series of articles, the writer, discussing legal grounds for separation, advanced the opinion that the presence of lodge members in the church and their toleration justified the breaking of ecclesiastical ties.[35] This position was qualified somewhat by a later article. According to the later writer, the justification is increased by the fact that the immigrants entered a church with which they were not thoroughly familiar. He asks whether the Christian Reformed people were aware of the existence of freemasonry in the Reformed Church when they joined it in 1850. The reply is that they were not fully aware of it. They knew something of it, but the Reformed Church belittled its significance.[36]

The discussion of this question was carried on not only within the confines of the Christian Reformed Church itself. The question of lodge membership had been discussed at the Reformed Synods of 1867 and 1869, and the decisions proved highly unsatisfactory to the Dutch members of the church in Michigan. Classis Holland therefore appealed for a reconsideration of that question. The appeal, printed in *De Hope* and reprinted in *De Wachter,* reads in part as follows:

> Since the decisions of the General Synod in 1867-1869 in reference to Freemasonry, a steadily growing antipathy to secret societies has been revealed by our members. This has prompted a closer investigation of those organizations by our consistories . . . The more this investigation acquaints us with the outward form, the nature of the secret oath, and the known tendencies of the work of this and other secret societies, the more inward pain we feel that this foreign plant upon holy soil is permitted not only to encumber the ground, but proves harmful to the life of faith and the progress of sanctification, which is the calling of the

34. Continuing through Vols. VIII, IX, and X of De Wachter (1875-1877).
35. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 25; Vol. IX, nos. 2, 4 (March 2, April 13, May 11, 1876).
36. De Wachter, Vol. XIII, nos. 2, 3 (April 8 and April 22, 1880).

> church . . . Resolved that the Particular Synod petition the General Synod to establish constitutional means to root out the above evil.[37]

Classes Holland and Wisconsin of the Reformed Church had already sent memorials against freemasonry to the Particular Synod in 1870. These had produced no practical results. This renewing of the fight against lodge membership was watched with great interest by the Christian Reformed Church, which had definitely opposed the lodge in the Secession of 1857. Writers in *De Wachter* gave all possible encouragement to the opponents of secret societies in the other group.[38] In the later opposition to the lodge, the leader was the Rev. L. J. Hulst, pastor of a Reformed congregation in Grand Rapids, and one of the most tireless controversialists to appear in this story. His opposition to secret societies led to his deposition by Classis Grand Rapids of the Reformed Church.[39] This deposition in turn precipitated a transfer of several congregations from the Reformed to the Christian Reformed Church.[40]

This transfer of allegiance did not mean that the controversy was over, or that all the opponents of secret societies had now left the Reformed Church and joined the Christian Reformed. When the furor over the transfer of these congregations had died down, the two groups even co-operated in their opposition to secret societies. A meeting of the "Michigan Society Against Secret Societies" is reported at which both Christian Reformed and Reformed ministers were the speakers.[41] Sometimes a rather unusual turn was given to the discussion. In 1891 someone had the temerity to suggest that the Christian Reformed Church itself might unwittingly be harboring undetected masons! This was a surprise attack, but the Christian Reformed Church rose to the occasion. Classis Grand Rapids took steps to expose such members, if such there were, asking all those who knew of masons within the church to submit their names.[42]

Because of the implications of this question for the Secession of 1857, the attempt was made by both sides to draw the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands into the discussion.[43] This attempt became more and more successful as time went by. Comment from the Nether-

37. De Wachter, Vol. XIV, no. 7 (April 28, 1881), p. 3.
38. Ibid., no. 15 (June 23, 1881), p. 2.
39. Ibid., no. 40 (December 22, 1881), p. 3.
40. This transfer is discussed in Chapter IV.
41. De Wachter, Vol. XVI, no. 42 (January 9, 1884), p. 1.
42. De Wachter, Vol. XXIV, no. 1 (March 4, 1891), pp. 1 f.
43. De Wachter, Vol. XIV, no. 41 (January 5, 1882), p. 2.

lands was generally favorable to the Christian Reformed Church, condemning secret societies and advocating stern measures against them.[44] A rude surprise was therefore in store for the Christian Reformed Church when the learned and highly respected Dr. Abraham Kuyper gave his opinion in 1892. He wrote an article in which he condemned the masonic movement, but advocated keeping lodge members as church members, in order to work patiently with them.[45] This was substantially the position of the western classes of the Reformed Church in America. A spirited discussion ensued, in which several writers, Mr. Hulst in particular, sought to convince the learned doctor of his error and to show why his reasoning did not apply to the history of the Christian Reformed Church in America.[46]

The subjects of these debates were not strictly theological, but they were given a strong theological flavor by the writers. Writers on both sides of the disputed questions ran true to form in finding deep theological implications in the matters discussed. Whenever possible, Dutch theological authorities were cited to support the rival positions. The writers called on all their resources for this struggle, for to them and to their readers it was of great importance.

We may pause to note a few results of these debates. To a certain extent, the Christian Reformed Church achieved its goal with respect to immigration. We have noted how the relationships between the Christian Reformed Churches in Holland and America gradually improved.[47] As one writer has pointed out, this improvement came at a time when Calvinism was experiencing a revival in the Netherlands under Dr. Abraham Kuyper and his associates in the "Doleerende Kerken."[48] As a result, the American Christian Reformed Church attracted some men of staunch Calvinism and undeniable intellectual ability, who greatly improved the intellectual caliber of the church as a whole.[49] Immigration from the Netherlands was at a high level from 1880 to 1900, and the favor of the Dutch churches was reflected also in a considerable influx of laymen.[50]

44. De Wachter, Vol. XV, no. 17 (July 13, 1882), p. 1.
45. De Wachter, Vol. XXV, no. 39 (November 30, 1892), p. 1.
46. This controversy was slow to die. As late as 1914, one paper published a series of articles on Freemasonry in the Reformed Church.
Cf. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XVII, pp. 345, ff., 390 ff., 437.
47. Supra, p. 46.
48. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 121.
49. E. g., the Revs. R. T. Kuiper, L. J. Hulst, H. Van Hoogen, H. Beuker, and F. M. Ten Hoor, the last three of whom became professors at the Theological School.
50. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 121.

These spirited and protracted debates between the Reformed and Christian Reformed factions had a considerable effect also upon the members of the Christian Reformed Church. No member who kept himself posted on the debates, as most of them did, could fail to have a high degree of denominational self-consciousness. Neither group allowed the other to forget the reasons for separation. Each group constituted a challenge to the other to defend and consolidate its position. The charge constantly confronting the Christian Reformed people was this; your church is schismatic! The countercharge, often veiled, but sometimes bluntly stated, was this; your church is corrupt! The fervent denominational loyalty which resulted from this situation must be reckoned a good result. A further result, perhaps less commendable, but with far-reaching implications, was the extreme caution with which the Christian Reformed Church subsequently viewed all proposals of union or even co-operation with other ecclesiastical bodies. A positively evil result was the antagonistic spirit which was fostered among neighbors, the difficulty of co-operation in matters of common interest, and the impossibility of uniting the Dutch immigrants into one ecclesiastical body.[51]

Not all of the debates involved the rival ecclesiastical bodies. There were some debates within the Christian Reformed Church itself, which served to increase the appreciation of orthodoxy and the knowledge of the position of the church among its own members. We shall discuss two examples of such debates; the supralapsarian-infralapsarian debate and the discussion of the subject of baptism and regeneration.

We have described the first-named subject as an example of theological abstraction. It concerned the order of the divine decrees with respect to creation, the fall of man, and redemption. To the mind unaccustomed to such discussions, it is a source of amazement to discover how earnestly the subject was discussed, and what definite loyalties it aroused.[52] The name of Dr. Abraham Kuyper figures prominently in these debates, and their start dates from the time that his theological ideas began to influence thought in the Dutch-American churches.

The Reformed confessional standards "have always adopted the infralapsarian position, although they have never condemned but always

51. Cf. the "breakdown of union discussions" in Chapter IV.
52. Watson Groen in The Banner, September 15, 1935.

tolerated the other view."[53] The infralapsarian position has been described as the more historical of the two.[54] Dr. Kuyper, however, while paying due respect to history, was inclined strongly to the deductive method of reasoning, drawing the ultimate implications from his basic principles. He therefore favored the supralapsarian view, of which it is said, "The order of the decrees as accepted by the Supralapsarians is regarded as the more ideal, logical, and unified of the two."[55]

With the writings of Dr. Kuyper providing the occasion, *De Wachter* published a long series of articles on this controversial subject. There was at first no formal debate. The Rev. L. J. Hulst, in a series of twenty-three articles, sought to enlighten the reading public on this matter, adopting the infralapsarian position.[56] In some of the same issues, the Rev. J. Van der Werp defended and explained the same position.[57] Mr. Hulst's arguments were principally historical and doctrinal. Mr. Van der Werp applied Scriptural exegesis to the subject. The only opposition to these views which appeared at that time was embodied in two articles by the Rev. E. Bos. In the first of these articles, he cited a quotation from Calvin as favoring the supralapsarian position, and challenged the two other writers to prove either that Calvin had not meant what he seemed to mean, or that what he said was not Scriptural.[58] In the second, he took up the cudgels specifically against Mr. Hulst, claiming that he had misrepresented the supralapsarian position, setting up a man of straw which could easily be overthrown.[59]

There was in this discussion both a righteous defense of the Reformed standards and an opposition to the theological views of Dr. Kuyper. This appears more clearly in an article written by Mr. Hulst in 1895, in which he expresses himself as follows:

> For a considerable length of time, I, as well as others, have pointed out that Dr. Abraham Kuyper, who represents himself as exceptionally Reformed, is nevertheless actually not confessionally Reformed. In my 'Supra and Infra' I have demonstrated that he, by logical deduction, must arrive at shockingly unreformed conclusions. Many individuals who were otherwise agreed with me in principle have taken this ill of me. Since I

53. L. Berkhof, Reformed Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), Vol. I, p. 108.
54. Ibid., p. 107.
55. Ibid., p. 104.
56. De Wachter, Vol. XXIII, no. 44 to Vol. XXIV, no. 15 (January 14-June 10, 1891).
57. Ibid., Vol. XXIII, no. 48 to Vol. XXIV, no. 4 (February 11-March 25, 1891).
58. Ibid., Vol. XXIV, no. 4 (March 25, 1891), p. 1.
59. Ibid., no. 7 (April 15, 1891), p. 1.

> have resigned as editor of *De Wachter,* I have no longer considered this matter my responsibility, and have retired to the background, having made my convictions abundantly plain in my 'Supra and Infra.'
>
> I have not ceased to read what he has written, however, and have become increasingly convinced thereby that I have in principle not judged wrongly. At least it has become more apparent in his Encyclopedia (A. Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*) and the *Heraut* articles that he is building up a (so-called) Reformed system which is not based on the confessions of the Reformed churches, but which rests on and proceeds from philosophical principles, while at the same time he calls on well-known theologians, and often gives a forced citation of the standards of the Reformed churches.[60]

It is evident from the above quotation that Dr. Kuyper had some adherents as well as opponents in the Christian Reformed Church. This is further evidenced by a brief correspondence between Mr. Hulst and a layman, D. Bloksma, published in the following issues of *De Wachter,* in which Bloksma rises to the defense of the learned Dutch theologian.[61]

On the other hand, Mr. Hulst and *De Wachter* were not the only opponents of Dr. Kuyper and his supralapsarianism. Mr. Hulst mentions a few other opponents and their paper, *De Vrije Kerk,* in the article from which the above quotation was taken. More pertinent to our discussion is the attitude of *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan,* which was edited and published by Christian Reformed men. Its editor, Prof. F. M. Ten Hoor, was known for his opposition to the views of Kuyper, and that fact is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in his attitude to the supralapsarian problem. We present a characteristic excerpt from one of his articles:

> An honorable man cannot maintain a twofold doctrine in Christianity, as is done in some heathen religions; one for the teachers and initiates, and another for the common people and public consumption. Some expressions give the impression that certain people are inclined to do so. One of the "supra men" of old times, a certain professor, said, "In teaching the students I am supra, but on the pulpit before the people I am infra." It is also known that at one time Dr. A. Kuyper, Sr., said in *De Heraut* that in preaching one cannot proceed from the supra position. And Prof. G. Vos said at one time in his lectures on Dogmatics that one cannot build a practically serviceable covenant conception on the basis of the supra position.
>
> All this sounds very strange. The supra-men maintain that their conception of the familiar points of doctrine is obviously true and Reformed; and when one wishes to apply this conception in practical life, then they say, "This cannot be done." How is this to be explained? Are their ideas abstract, dead theories, which are entirely dissociated from life;

60. De Wachter, Vol. XXVIII, no. 17 (June 19, 1895), p. 1.
61. Ibid., nos. 19-21 (July 3-17, 1895).

> learned images, with which theoretical thought in the study and in schools of learning entertains itself?[62]

The standpoint of *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan* was so consistently infralapsarian that in 1907 one of its editors had to defend it against the charge that it refused to place any supralapsarian material.[63] This defense makes mention of an opposition paper, undoubtedly *De Getuige,* which warmly championed the views of Dr. Kuyper. In 1910 *De Getuige* was merged with several other papers to form *De Calvinist,* which continued for a number of years to advocate Dr. Kuyper's views.[64]

We have made no attempt to reproduce the arguments pro and con in this discussion. This attempt would have been difficult because of the volume of the argument. It would furthermore have been fruitless, because of the necessarily inconclusive nature of the dispute. Prof. L. Berkhof presents the following judgment with regard to this problem:

> From what was said it would seem to follow that we cannot regard Supra and Infralapsarianism as absolutely antithetical. They look at the same mystery from different points of view, the one fixing its attention on the ideal or teleological, the other on the historical order of the decrees. To a certain extent they can and must go hand in hand. Both find support in Scripture, Supralapsarianism in those passages that stress the sovereignty of God and Infralapsarianism in those that stress the mercy and justice of God, in connection with election and reprobation. Each has something in its favor . . . Both are necessarily inconsistent . . . But each one of them also emphasizes an element of truth.[65]

The judgment of the Church was that no one could be molested for holding either view.[66]

Inconclusive though this argument was, it sheds some interesting sidelights upon the character of the Christian Reformed Church. One writer has remarked that the whole matter of Dr. Kuyper's views

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62. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. IX (September, 1905), p. 391.

63. "And now it is really time that we speak out. I herewith declare that it is untrue that the Amerikaan has ever shown itself to be partisan; has ever consigned articles of supralapsarian content or tendency to the wastebasket; has forced or asked any member of the staff to refrain from expressing himself; or may be called the occasion for the appearance of another periodical. None of the charges are true. Let no one repeat them, lest he make himself guilty of slander."
De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XI (October, 1907), p. 474.

64. "De Calvinist, in which Getuige, Schoolbel, and Gids are merged, is a paper which is printed in Kalamazoo, although it is mailed from Grand Rapids. As is well known, it reflects the views of Dr. A. Kuyper in the political and religious spheres, and it is the organ of the Christian School movement among the Calvinistic Hollanders in the United States. It is now in its 6th year."
De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XX (December, 1916), p. 515.

65. Berkhof, op. cit., I, pp. 110-111.

66. "The Conclusions of Utrecht state that, while it is not permissible to represent the supralapsarian view as the doctrine of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, it is just as little permissible to interfere with anyone who cherishes that view for himself."
Ibid.
These Conclusions of Utrecht were adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1908.

divided opinion rather sharply within that church.[67] It may therefore be remarked in passing that this was one dispute within the Christian Reformed Church which did not lead to any division or schism. If this fact needs explanation, it was probably because neither party could demonstrate that the other's position was un-Scriptural or would tend to deleterious results in the life of the church.

In this matter the orientation of the Christian Reformed Church with respect to its American environment is seen to be far from complete. The whole matter was introduced on the occasion of the appearance of new views in the Netherlands. This reminds us of the fact that even the more localized disputes which we considered earlier were conducted with close neighbors of like background, and with the purpose of gaining the favor of the Dutch churches. In other words, the orientation was still toward Holland. In the present discussion likewise, Dutch problems, writers, and opinions played a most prominent role. The influence of heredity is seen also in the preoccupation with a subject concerning the divine decrees, so characteristic of Reformed theology as it was developed in Holland.

Closely related to the above observation is another concerning the attitude adopted to this question by *De Wachter* and *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan.* The orthodoxy which they defended and advocated was a confessional orthodoxy. They did, indeed, relate their arguments to Scripture, but they were concerned mainly with maintaining the interpretation of the creeds which had become traditional. They considered themselves champions of orthodoxy, not only with respect to their American environment, but also with respect to innovations in Dutch theology.

It is worthy of comment also that the lay members of the church were interested in this dispute. Particularly with respect to *De Wachter* it is true that the discussion was carried on not in an abstract and scholarly theological journal, but in an official church publication designed for the enlightenment and reading pleasure of the general public. The church members took sides in the argument.[68] This lay interest reveals not only an interest in church affairs, which is not surprising, but also some measure of ability to grasp the drift of

67. Groen, op. cit.
68. Ibid.

involved and abstract theological argument.[69] This fact is surprising and revealing. It is especially so when we consider that these laymen were people of the lower middle classes, with little education, and confronted by the stern task of earning a living in a strange new world and under semi-frontier conditions.

We have discussed examples of debates between the Reformed and Christian Reformed immigrants in the Middle West and between opponents and adherents of the ideas of Dr. Kuyper in the Netherlands. We now consider one more discussion, which was the subject of considerable difference of opinion within the Christian Reformed Church itself. It concerns the understanding and application of the Covenant of Grace, which was a cornerstone of the theology of the Christian Reformed Church. It touched the spiritual life of the church members more directly and affected it more vitally than any of the questions previously discussed.

In 1875, J. Van den Berge wrote an article in *De Wachter* entitled, "The Promises." His starting point was the position that the covenant promises were just as significant for the New Testament believer as they were for Old Testament Israel. He elaborated upon the certainty of the promises of God and the solid comfort which they afforded the true believer. He then commented upon the Baptismal Formula of the church, in which the believers assert that they believe that their children are "sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of His Church ought to be baptized." He concluded by citing the comment of á Brakel, *Redelijke Godsdienst,* Vol. I, p. 968:

> All children of covenant believers who die in infancy, whether converted or unconverted, whether before or after the reception of baptism, must be considered saved, on the strength of the covenant of God in which they are born, and must be considered children of the Covenant.[70]

This article aroused speedy reaction, which took the form of letters to the editor. Two such letters were published in a later issue of *De Wachter,* one from a woman, Adrianna Garvelink, of the congregation at Graafschap, Michigan, and the other from a member in Chicago.[71] Both letters followed substantially the same line of argument; that "not all are Israel who are of Israel" and that God distinguished between Esau and Jacob before their birth. In short, the writers

69. Cf. the participation of D. Bloksma in the discussion of this subject. De Wachter, Vol. XXVIII, nos. 19-21 (July 3-17, 1895).
70. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 1 (April 1, 1875), p. 2.
71. Ibid., no. 3 (April 29, 1875), p. 2.

objected that the sovereign election of God precluded such absolute assurance of the application of His promises to the children as Mr. Van den Berge had argued.

Editor G. E. Boer followed the two letters with a statement of his reasons for publishing them. He stated that the reason for placement was not his agreement with the argument of the letters nor the light which they shed on the doctrine of the covenant. Rather, he placed them because they reflected a considerable lack of unanimity on this doctrine within the bosom of the church, and a failure to understand the doctrine properly. He then proceeded to explain the doctrine in substantially the same terms as those of the original article.[72]

Neither the editor's articles[73] nor the opinion of another member of the Graafschap congregation that the source of the dispute was a misunderstanding of each other's position[74] served to end the dispute. After printing another letter on the insistence of several members of the Graafschap congregation, the editor optimistically declared the discussion closed, since it concerned matters which had been clearly expressed, and was becoming unprofitable.[75] His optimism, however, was a trifle premature. An apparently innocent article on the interpretation of Scripture[76] was viewed, perhaps correctly, as casting personal reflections on one of the controversialists. After having objected to the article in the next issue of *De Wachter,* the aggrieved party reiterated his position with respect to the Covenant of Grace, and requested that the matter be discussed at the next meeting of Classis. To this letter, the editor appended a caustic comment:

> The next Classis, if it wishes to satisfy the request of brother ———, must then decide whether it wishes to remain Reformed on this point or go over to the views of the Baptists or something else; certainly not a pleasant task. Must it then be decided by majority vote whether God's Word speaks the truth; or must a majority vote determine what the meaning of the Word is with respect to the Covenant idea? On that point the Reformed church has expressed itself clearly for generations. If in a little while someone should maintain that God is not from eternity, would Classis then have to decide if this is true?[77]

The silence which followed this editorial comment was only temporary. There were desultory remarks on the subject every year. By 1883

72. Ibid.
73. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, nos. 3-6 (April 29-June 10, 1875).
74. A. H. Brink, in De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 5 (May 27, 1875).
75. Ibid., no. 7 (June 24, 1875), p. 3.
76. Ibid., no. 9 (July 22, 1875), p. 4.
77. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 10 (August 5, 1875), p. 3.

the subject had again come up for general discussion. Late in 1882 a writer commented upon a recent discussion of the Covenant topic, and remarked:

> I hope that many more questions concerning the Covenant and related subjects will arise, and that the esteemed editor will have occasion to answer them in his entertaining and practical way. I believe that it is time for us to become clear in our Covenant conception, because I believe that a true appreciation of the whole work of salvation depends on a proper understanding of the covenant idea. And as far as life is concerned — those who stand pure and firm in this covenant idea are usually pure and firm also in their walk of life, in the "new obedience," with respect both to themselves and to their children.[78]

The author closes his article with a "Cradle Song for Christian Mothers and Children of the Covenant" in six stanzas. Most likely his desire to have the covenant conception clarified referred to the popular understanding of the position of the church rather than to any clarification of that stand itself.

The old objections to the official standpoint were still extant, and held by ministers as well as laymen. A minister responded to the above article in "A Brief Word Concerning the Covenant Idea." He mentioned the passages in the Old and New Testaments which encouraged believing parents to be assured of the salvation of their children. But he added this comment:

> But these various citations from the Old and New Testaments do not imply that thereby everyone who has received the Sacraments, person by person, has a seal of his personal, certain share in the benefits of the Covenant. In that sense, only the elect receive the seal.[79]

To this article editor G. K. Hemkes appended a note, in which he said:

> This is fair enough. The writer has given his personal opinion, and it is not difficult to demonstrate that this differs in a considerable degree from the opinions of the Fathers of Dort.

It is therefore plain that both the editorial stand and the objections to it were the same as those reflected in the similar discussion eight years earlier.

At least one reader failed to consider the editorial comment a sufficient answer to the opinion expressed in the "Brief Word." He responded in what he euphemistically called "Another Brief Word," although it involved two articles and covered five columns of material.[80] Editor Hemkes welcomed this discussion. He recognized that the dif-

78. De Wachter, Vol. XV, no. 36 (November 23, 1882), p. 3.
79. Rev. E. L. Meinders in De Wachter, Vol. XV, no. 46 (Feb. 8, 1883).

ferences of opinion were of long standing, and considered it high time that they were settled. He writes:

> There may be readers who have long since wearied of this discussion, or who even think that *De Wachter* is losing its distinctiveness thereby. I would like to say to them that I by no means agree in this opinion. I ask you, would it be better to silence this discussion for a time, since it must eventually be reopened? Is not the underlying matter important enough? Do you not feel a personal need for more clarity in this matter?[81]

Oddly enough, this invitation to a full discussion seems to have ended the matter more effectively than the previous editor's dictum of silence.

From time to time this question arose for renewed discussion. *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan* published a series of articles on the Covenant in its first volume.[82] As late as 1914 it was the subject of a synodical decision. A certain minister objected to the assumption of regeneration in baptism, as reflected in the Baptismal Formula. When his classis opposed him, he appealed to Synod. Synod supported the classis, upholding "presumptive regeneration." They said that they "were not willing to weaken the strong language of the fathers."[83]

It is apparent from the above discussion that the leaders and members of the Christian Reformed Church were concerned for orthodoxy within their own ranks as well as among their Dutch Reformed neighbors and their friends in the Netherlands. The same characteristics which the previous controversies brought to light are illustrated in this discussion. We can again discover a general interest in a characteristically Reformed doctrine; a free-for-all discussion of a controversial matter in the church paper; the active participation of laymen in the dispute; the assumption on the part of the editors that such a subject would hold the interest of the readers; and the desire on the part of the leaders to maintain that system of doctrine which was handed down from the fathers, particularly in the Synod of Dort.

The subject matter of this last discussion was a practical matter as well as doctrinal, touching on the assurance of salvation with respect to the children of believing parents. Apart from the answer given to the

80. A. H. Brink in De Wachter, Vol. XVI, nos. 4, 5 (April 5, 12, 1883).
81. Ibid., no. 8 (May 3, 1883), p. 1.
82. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. 1 (1897), pp. 44-48, 76-80, 184-187, etc.
83. Objection of the Rev. D. J. Van der Werp. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1914, art. 68, part iii, pp. 77-81.
This question has not yet disappeared from Dutch Reformed circles. It was the occasion for a schism in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Holland in 1945.

question, the discussion itself served a worthy purpose in the preservation of orthodoxy. It kept before the minds of the people their view of God standing in a covenant relationship to themselves and their children. That relationship involved not only great comforts, but great responsibilities as well, with respect to the nurture and education of those children. If anyone were ignorant of those responsibilities, the discussion would enlighten him. If anyone were inclined to lose sight of them, the frequent mention of the matter in his church paper would be a valuable reminder.

We may remark concerning all these disputed subjects that, when seen in a broad perspective, they concerned minor matters. There was nothing so fundamental involved as, let us say, image worship or Pelagianism. The discussions concerned theological refinements or minor matters of interpretation. We may conclude from this that there was a large area of agreement among the people. We find this to be true, in fact, not only of the Christian Reformed people themselves, but of their relationships with their fellow adherents to the Reformed faith in the Netherlands and in Western Michigan. But let us suggest also that this very willingness to deal patiently and exhaustively with small matters was profitable. It may on some occasions have led to a fruitless animosity against opponents. But on the other hand, such a determination to find a satisfactory settlement of even small matters served to prevent them from growing into larger disagreements.

It might be asked whether such free expression of divergent views as was found in these discussions would not be as likely to lead to heresy as to contribute to orthodoxy. We would reply that in general an open discussion is far more profitable for everybody concerned than an attempt at repression. In the case of these people, this was the truer because there were certain authorities to which they all gave heed. If any matter could be clearly demonstrated from the Bible and from the Reformed fathers, that matter was accepted by all. Thus these discussions capitalized upon an already existing spirit of orthodoxy to perpetuate that orthodoxy and make agreement upon it more complete.

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Part of the heritage of the Christian Reformed Church was an interest in theological discussion which was developed and exploited by the church in America. It was an interest shared by leaders and laymen,

and was of such an extent as to dominate the content of the official church paper. It reflected a preoccupation with characteristically Reformed subjects and the preservation of close ties with the kindred churches in the Netherlands. It was used to court the favor of the Dutch churches, and resulted in the enrichment of the Christian Reformed Church through the immigration of intelligent and like-minded ministers and laymen. It promoted a strong denominational consciousness and loyalty. It served the interests of orthodoxy by educating the people and tending toward a high degree of unanimity in doctrinal outlook.

CHAPTER III

Enforcement of Orthodoxy by Ecclesiastical Action

The spirit of orthodoxy in the Christian Reformed Church has been subjected to some severe tests during the ninety years of the church's existence, but the tendencies toward heterodoxy have been vigorously resisted. From the standpoint of formal adherence to the doctrinal standards, the resistance to change may be described as completely successful. If the resistance to change in the practical application of those standards to life was less successful, it was only slightly so. In this chapter it is our purpose to see how the existing orthodoxy was enforced by ecclesiastical action.

The criterion of its orthodoxy is formally embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church. Characteristically, the church did not formulate any new standards at the time of its organization. It possessed a doctrinal heritage of which it was proud and which it sought merely to defend, not to alter or improve. The three confessional standards of the church are the Belgic Confession, written by Guy de Bres in 1561, the Heidelberg Catechism of Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, written in 1563, and the Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht (now called the Canons of Dort) in 1618-1619. All three standards were therefore in effect by the time the first Reformed body of Dutch descent made its appearance on the North American continent. It was for this reason that Dr. Wyckoff could find complete agreement between his church and that of the immigrants on creedal standards.

The point of contact between these standards and the officers of the Christian Reformed Church lies in the Formula of Subscription, adopted by the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619. An English translation of this Formula was adopted by the Christian Reformed Synod of 1912.[1] Every minister, theological professor, elder, and deacon in the

1. English translation quoted in J. L. Schaver, **The Polity of the Churches** (Chicago: Church Polity Press, 1947), II, pp. 238 f.

Christian Reformed Church is required to sign this formula.[2] Because of its central importance for the discussion which will follow, we quote the Formula of Subscription in full:

> We, the undersigned, professors of the Christian Reformed Church, ministers of the Gospel, elders and deacons of the Christian Reformed congregation of ————, of the Classis of ————, do hereby sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this, our subscription, that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine, contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine, made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, do fully agree with the Word of God.
>
> We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching or writing.
>
> We declare moreover that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned Synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors. And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the Consistory, Classis, and Synod, that the same may be there examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Classis, and Synod, under the penalty in case of refusal of being by that very fact suspended from our office.
>
> And further, if at any time the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod, we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves, however, the right of an appeal whenever we shall believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the Consistory or the Classis; and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.[3]

This is an iron-clad rule of subscription to the doctrinal standards. The only remote possibility of introducing any fundamental—or minor —changes in the Creeds lies in two relevant articles of the Church Order. We read in those articles as follows:

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2. "The ministers of the Word of God and likewise the professors of theology (which also behooves the other professors and school teachers) shall subscribe to the Three Formulas of Unity:—namely, the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, and the ministers of the Word who refuse to do so shall de facto be suspended from their office by the Consistory or Classis until they shall have given a full statement, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be deposed from their office."
Christian Reformed Church Order, Art. 53.
"Likewise the elders and deacons shall subscribe to the aforesaid Formulas of Unity." Ibid., Art. 54.

3. Schaver, op. cit., pp. 238 f.

> Art. 31. If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the Articles of the Church Order, as long as they are not changed by a General Synod.[4]
>
> Art. 86. These Articles, relating to the lawful order of the Church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they (if the profit of the Church demand otherwise) may and ought to be altered, augmented, or diminished. However, no particular congregation, Classis, (or Synod), shall be at liberty to do so, but they shall show all diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the General Synod.[5]

In the first article quoted, appeal is made either to the Word of God or to the Church Order. In the second, provision is made for alteration of the Church Order. It should be noted that the Christian Reformed Church, in the second article quoted, depends heavily upon an orthodox spirit in its synods for the preservation of its orthodoxy. Its safeguards for the Church Order are less than those in other Reformed denominations. The Rev. Schaver writes:

> Amendment Not Difficult Enough. — The Churches have generally made special provision to render their constitutions perpetual by guarding them against innovations. For revision of its Constitution the Reformed Church in America has the following ruling: an amendment shall be made "only upon a recommendation to the Classes by the General Synod . . . and by the subsequent approval of two-thirds of the Classes." The approval of a majority of its Presbyteries is required in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. if a proposed amendment is to go into effect. Revision of our Church Order is comparatively easy — and this involves a great risk. Majorities in Synods shift easily and rapidly. Our Church should safeguard itself against the present ease of revision by requiring approval of a proposed amendment by some rule similar to those of other denominations.[6]

It is highly improbable that the Christian Reformed Church deliberately made change easy. Without doubt this situation exists because of a rather bland confidence that the Synods will always be of an orthodox mind.

Although the Christian Reformed Church is orthodox in spirit, and no fundamental changes have thus far been made in its creeds, Reformed tradition does not forbid change. In reporting on a recent doctrinal case, a synodical committee quoted some relevant statements of Reformed writers:

> The door to confessional revision has always been left open. Prof. Dr. H. Bouwman accurately states the prevailing attitude of Reformed Churches as follows: The Church did not place the confession next to

4. Ibid., pp. 50 f.
5. Ibid., p. 51.
6. Ibid., p. 60.

> or above, but under Scripture, and maintained that the confession ought to be examined in the light of Scripture, which is the only rule of faith and life. The confession . . . is a derived rule of faith. It is the work of men, completely subjected to the Word of God. Not the Church, but the Scripture is "autopistos." . . . The Reformed (people) are thus opponents of a false confessionalism, which would crystallize the confession and stultify the development of doctrine. They desire, according to the words of Lasco, "not to cut off the development of future ages through the greater light which God may be pleased to give." . . . Revision of the confession is always possible. But this revision is profitable only when the Church, standing upon a high spiritual plane, after diligent study and painstaking preparation, adhering to principle, is in a position to express its faith more clearly and truly from Scripture." (*Christelijke Encyclopaedie,* I, pp. 276 f.)
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> The practice of the Reformed Churches at the early date of 1565, when they were still "De Kerken onder 't Kruis," is instructive on this point. A transcript of Article One of the minutes of "The Synod held in the Vineyard (a fictitious name for Antwerp) on Pentecost Day, 1565," speaks for itself; "That at the beginning of each Synod, The Confession of Faith of the Churches of this land shall be read; as much for to declare our unity as to see whether there is something to change or amend." (*Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkelijke Gescheidenis,* IX, 1849, p. 152.)[7]

The actual changes during the ninety years have involved two relatively minor matters. The first is an adjustment to the American environment with its separation of Church and State. It concerns the Belgic Confession, Article XXXVI, entitled, "The Magistracy (Civil Government)." The crux of the difficulty lies in the second paragraph of that article, which originally read as follows:

> Their office (that of kings, princes, and magistrates) is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also that they protect the sacred ministry, and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed and the kingdom of God promoted. They must therefore countenance the preaching of the Word of the gospel everywhere, that God may be honored and worshipped by everyone, as He commands in His Word.

The complete applicability of this article to the American situation was subject to question early in the history of the Christian Reformed Church.[8] In 1879 *De Wachter* published an article which had first been heard as a paper at a ministers' conference. The author granted that the State had some duties with respect to the Church. But he pointed out that, according to the article in question, the State had the duty to choose one kind of religion and support that. This standpoint

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7. Agenda for Synod, 1946, pp. 111 f.

8. The question of its applicability in the Netherlands after 1834 seems not to have been discussed before the emigration of 1846-1847. It has, however, been discussed since that time, and a final revision is pending at present.

could not be maintained in the new world.[9] Twenty years later the matter was again seriously considered. The Rev. L. J. Hulst, in a series of articles, reflected the trend of current thought. He remarked that the same problem was then being considered in the Netherlands. He pointed out also that no changes ought to be made in the creeds without the utmost necessity. Then he gave a well-considered discussion of the value and dangers of Article XXXVI as originally written.[10]

The general dissatisfaction with the article eventually took shape in official action. In 1906, three classes and one congregation petitioned Synod for a revision of the article.[11] Two of these petitions referred to a decision taken by the Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands in 1905, and a third described itself as a "gravamen," or objection, to the creed.[12] Synod declared itself in favor of a revision of the article and appointed a committee to prepare such a revision and report to the Synod of 1908.[13] The Synod of 1908 did not act upon the report of this committee, because the committee had failed to understand what was intended by the term "revision." Synod appointed a new committee with the specific mandate to "give a more accurate explanation of the disputed portion of Art. 36 in a note."[14]

Upon reception of the report of this committee in 1910, concrete action was taken. The committee recommended the following note, to be appended to Article XXXVI:

> This phrase, touching the office of the magistracy in its relation to the Church, proceeds from the principle of the Established Church, which was first applied by Constantine and afterwards also in many Protestant countries. History, however, does not justify the principle of State domination over the Church, but rather a certain separation of Church and State. Moreover, it is also contrary to the New Dispensation that authority be vested in the State arbitrarily to reform the Church, and to deny the Church the right of independently conducting its own affairs as a distinct domain alongside the State. The New Testament does not subject the Christian Church to the authority of the State that it should be controlled and extended by political measures, but only to our Lord and King as an independent domain alongside and altogether independent of the State, that it may be governed and built up only by its office-bearers and with spiritual means. Prac-

9. De Wachter, Vol. XII, no. 2 (April 10, 1879), p. 2.
10. De Wachter, Vol. XXXI, no. 50 to Vol. XXXII, no. 1 (Feb. 1-22, 1898).
11. Acts of Synod, 1908, Art. 93, Part V, p. 53.
12. Loc. cit., overtures of Classis Illinois and Lagrave St., Grand Rapids, Consistory; overture of Classis Grand Rapids West.
13. Acts of Synod, 1906, pp. 53 f.
14. Acts of Synod, 1908, Art. 20, sec. v, p. 49.

tically all Reformed Churches have relinquished the idea of the Established Church as not in accordance with the New Testament, and advocate the autonomy of the Churches and personal liberty of conscience in the service of God.

The Christian Reformed Church in America, being in full accord with this view, feels constrained to declare that it does not conceive of the office of the magistracy in this sense, that it is in duty bound to exercise political authority also in the sphere of religion by establishing a State Church, maintaining and advancing the same as the only true Church, and to withstand, destroy, and exterminate by means of the sword all other Churches as embodying false religions; and also to declare that it does positively hold that, within its own secular sphere, the magistracy has a divine duty with reference to the first table of the Law as well as the second; and furthermore that both State and Church as institutions of God and Christ have mutual rights and duties appointed them from on high, and therefore have a very sacred reciprocal obligation to meet, through the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. They should not, however, encroach upon each other's domains. The Church as well as the State has the right of sovereignty in its own sphere.[15]

The official stand of the Church remained in this state for a quarter of a century. But in 1936 the Seminary Faculty expressed its dissatisfaction with the article as revised by the footnote, and requested a clearer and more positive formulation. The Faculty took note of the fact that the Reformed Church in America had a committee studying the same matter.[16] The Faculty further considered an explanatory note suitable only when an article was subject to more than one possible interpretation.[17] They were instructed to present an improved formulation to the next Synod. Their advice was to drop the footnote formerly adopted and also to exscind a portion of the disputed clause. According to their recommendation, the article should read, "Their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also to protect the sacred ministry, that the Kingdom of Christ may thus be promoted." Synod adopted this advice.[18] A protest against this decision received by the Synod of 1939 was not sustained.[19] Another protest, in 1940, led to the appointment of a committee instructed to "study the matter of the relationship of Church and State, with a view to the reformulation of Art. 36 in its entirety."[20]

The proposed revision was finally presented in 1946. We present

15. Acts of Synod, 1910, Supplement X, p. 104.
16. Agenda for Synod, 1936, p. 340.
17. Agenda for Synod, 1936, p. 338.
18. Acts of Synod, 1938, Art. 34, pp. 16-20.
19. Acts of Synod, 1939, Art. 97, p. 88.
20. Acts of Synod, 1940, p. 82.

the original article and the proposed revision in parallel columns for purposes of comparison.

Article XXXVI (Original)

We believe that our gracious God because of the depravity of mankind has appointed kings, princes, and magistrates; willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies; to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among them with good order and decency. For this purpose He has invested the magistracy with the sword for the punishment of evil-doers and for the protection of them that do well.

Their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also that they protect the sacred ministry, and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed and the kingdom of God promoted. They must therefore countenance the preaching of the Word of the gospel everywhere, that God may be honored and worshipped by everyone, as He commands in His Word.

Moreover, it is the bounden duty of every one, of whatever state, quality, or condition he may be, to show due honor and respect unto them and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the Word of God; to supplicate for them in their prayers that God may rule and guide them in all their ways, and that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity.

Wherefore we detest the Anabaptists and other seditious people, and in general all those who reject the higher powers and magistrates and who would subvert justice, introduce community of goods, and confound that decency and good order which God has established among men.[21]

(Proposed Revision)

We believe that our gracious God because of the depravity of mankind has appointed civil rulers; willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies; to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained, and all things be carried on among them in good order and decency. For this purpose, He has invested the magistracy with the power of the sword, for the punishment of evil-doers and the protection of them that do well, thus creating an orderly society in which the Gospel may be freely preached everywhere, the Church may thrive, and the works of antichrist may be restrained.

However, the power which the sovereign God, the source of all authority among men, has given the civil rulers is by no means unrestricted. God has also instituted other spheres of sovereignty such as the Church and the family. Hence, the State must recognize and protect the sovereignty of the Church in the worship of God and the individual in his freedom of conscience, person, and possessions.

Believing thus, we must condemn and oppose the doctrine that the Individual exists solely for the State, as well as every theory of government which would give the State control over men's consciences, permit the State to make a servant of the Church, or usurp the liberties God has given in the various spheres of life.

Moreover, we believe it to be the bounden duty of everyone to subject himself to the magistrates; to pay taxes; to show due honor and respect to them; to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the Word of God; and to supplicate for them in their prayers that God may rule and guide them in all their ways, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and gravity.

Wherefore we detest the teaching of the seditious Anabaptists and other revolution-minded people who reject the higher powers, propagate an atheistic communism, and would confound the decency and good order which God has established among men.[22]

21. Philip Schaff, **The Creeds of Christendom** (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882) Vol. III, pp. 432 f.

22. **Acts of Synod, 1946**, p. 418.

A few words of comment upon this revision are in order. The conception of the function of the magistracy is somewhat narrower in the first paragraph of the revision than in the original. The magistracy is required to provide freedom for the Church to carry out the will of God in the moral spheres rather than to carry out that will directly by itself. This is in effect a minimizing of common grace, not surprising in a small denomination. Likewise, the second paragraph of the revision is decidedly negative by comparison with the corresponding section of the original. It gives the impression of limiting rather than supporting the powers and rights of the civil government in religious and moral matters. This tendency is carried still further in the third paragraph of the revision, a section which is very contemporary in its repudiation of the totalitarian state. The intent of the revision appears thus to be an adjustment, not only to the separation of Church and State in America, but to contemporary conditions. And, consciously or unconsciously, the concluding paragraph of the revision gives more scope for social and economic changes than does the original. Instead of condemning those who "introduce community of goods," it singles out "atheistic communism" for condemnation. The implication is that it is the atheism of a certain type of communism rather than community of goods itself which is to be condemned.

The committee also recommended that the other churches who hold to the Belgic Confession be acquainted with this proposed revision and their opinion on it be asked. They also advised strongly against hasty action.[23] Because the members of Synod had not had time to study this voluminous report, Synod postponed action on it until 1947,[24] at which time it was still further postponed.[25] The revision quoted above is thus not finally approved as yet, but it gives an indication of the direction in which Christian Reformed thought is turning.

We have presented the matter thus fully because it is an illustration of the possibility of revising the creeds under the existing Church Order. It may also be remarked that this lengthy discussion illustrates

23. Ibid., p. 419.
24. Ibid., p. 38.
25. Acts of Synod, 1947, pp. 83 ff.

the difficulty experienced by a conservative church in bringing about any revision, however minor, in its creeds.

The other change in the creedal standards involved no revision, but merely an interpretation touching on four disputed points of doctrine: the supralapsarian-infralapsarian question; justification from eternity; immediate regeneration; and presumptive regeneration. We have mentioned the discussion of all four of these points in our previous chapter, and will not now review the preliminary discussion. The Synod of 1906 received overtures from four classes respecting the adoption of the Conclusions of the Synod of Utrecht (1905) on these matters. The majority of the committee for this matter advised against adoption, on the grounds that official interpretations of the Creed ought to be made only when an urgent necessity demanded it. The minority recognized sufficient discussion of these points in the Christian Reformed Church in America to warrant adoption of the Conclusions. The matter was tabled by this Synod.[26]

At the Synod of 1908 the matter was reopened. The minority report presented to the previous Synod was adopted, and the Conclusions of Utrecht became part of the official standards of the church.[27] On the *infralapsarian-supralapsarian* question, the Conclusions forbid molesting any man for holding either view. They also warn against overemphasis on these deep matters in preaching and teaching. On the question of *justification from eternity,* the Conclusions declare that while this expression does not appear in the confessional standards, it is part of the teaching of Scripture, and hence of the faith of the Church. They warn against a denial of either Christ's eternal surety for His own or the necessity of true faith to appropriate the blessings of salvation. With respect to *immediate regeneration* they declare that this is a Biblical doctrine in the sense that regeneration comes not through the Word or Sacraments as such, but is of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the Holy Spirit works through the Word, and while the power of God would be great enough to omit this agency, there is no warrant for supposing that God ever chooses to do so. With respect to *presumptive regeneration* they declare that the seed of the Covenant is

26. Acts of Synod, 1906, pp. 54 f.
27. Acts of Synod, 1908, pp. 40 f.

to be held to be regenerated and sanctified in Christ until their conduct or beliefs as adults prove the contrary. Baptism, however, is not to be administered on the ground of this presumptive regeneration, but in obedience to the command of God.[28]

Apart from these two changes, the historic standards remain unaltered. In view of the attitude of Modernism to the creeds,[29] however, it must be further demonstrated that the Christian Reformed Church holds these creeds not merely as valuable historical documents, but as authoritative and binding. That consideration is fundamental to the understanding of the orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church. It can best be seen in the enforcement of these standards by the ecclesiastical courts.

Action in the ecclesiastical courts ordinarily begins with the local consistory, as the real guardian of orthodoxy. The Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary, as immediate supervisor of those institutions, may also initiate action. If the matter can be settled on the lowest level, it proceeds no farther.[30] If the complainant is not satisfied, or if the consistory considers itself unable properly to decide the matter, it is brought to the classis to which the consistory belongs. The next and last court of appeal, there being no particular synods, is the General Synod.[31]

We turn now to the consideration of these courts in action, studying the concrete examples of the enforcement of doctrinal orthodoxy.

The first type of departure from the accepted standards was dealt with at the Synod of 1918, with repercussions at the Synods of 1920 and 1922. It reflects the impact of the environment upon the Christian Reformed Church in the threatened introduction of premillennial views, under the influence of Fundamentalism. This case is commonly called the "Maranatha Case," from the name of the book in which the

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28. The Conclusions of Utrecht are found in the **Acts of Synod**, 1908, Supplement XII, pp. 81-83.

29. "They (the Modernists) even speak highly of the creeds as valuable historical documents, and want to retain them, without recognizing their authoritative character, but insist on giving a more modern symbolical interpretation of them."
L. Berkhof, "Modernism and Some of its Disillusionments," **The Banner**, Vol. LXXXII (July 25, 1947), p. 887.

30. "In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted, and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common."
Christian Reformed Church Order, Art. 30.

31. These courts will be formally considered in Chapter VII.

condemned views were propagated. According to the testimony of the committee which reported on this case, the precise points of dispute were not the millennium itself, the second resurrection, nor the return of the Jews to Palestine, but the unity of the Church in all dispensations and the Kingship of Christ.[32]

The publication of premillennial views on these points by the Rev. H. Bultema, in his book, *Maranatha,* aroused unrest in the churches. The Synod of 1918 received four overtures on this matter, from Classes Zeeland, Holland, Sioux Center, and Orange City.[33] The overture of Classis Zeeland was rejected, since it asked Synod itself to discipline Mr. Bultema. This was declared to be contrary to the principle of Reformed polity that discipline pertained to the consistories, not Synod or the classes.[34] The other overtures asked that Synod condemn the erroneous statements (false doctrines) defended in *Maranatha.* The Rev. Bultema had presented no "gravamina" against the creeds on the disputed points, nor had he asked that the creeds be tested in the light of Scripture. In keeping with the assumption and belief that the confessions were in full harmony with Scripture, Synod proceeded to judge the case strictly on the basis of the creeds.[35]

On that basis, a decision was speedily reached. The committee cited passages from *Maranatha* which clearly stated that the Church did not exist until after the coming of Christ, and that Christ was King, not of the Church, but only of Israel.[36] Passages were cited from the confessions which clearly contradicted these views.[37] When confronted with this evidence, Mr. Bultema refused to retract the statements found in his book.[38] Synod therefore condemned the views, and referred the case of the minister back to his consistory for proper disciplinary action.[39] A committee of three was appointed to present this matter to the consistory and assist them in their action.[40]

The committee of three carried out its mandate in presenting this matter to the Consistory of the First Christian Reformed Church of

32. Acts of Synod, 1918, p. 78.
33. Ibid., p. 75.
34. Ibid., pp. 75 f.
35. Ibid., p. 76.
36. Ibid., p. 78.
37. Concerning the unity of the Church; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XXI, Answer 54; Belgic Confession, Art. XXXVII. Concerning the Kingship of Christ; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XII, Answer 31; Belgic Confession, Art. XXXVII. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1918, pp. 76 f.
38. Ibid., p. 80.
39. On the jurisdiction of the Consistory over the pastor, see Chapter VII, infra.
40. Acts of Synod, 1918, p. 80.

Muskegon, Michigan. They received a reply from that consistory, in a letter dated October 11, 1918, in which the consistory stated that their minister had never intended to contradict the creeds. He had not presented gravamina against them because, so he stated, he was not aware that his views conflicted with them.[41] The committee so reported to the Synod of 1920. The same Synod received a report from the fraternal delegates of Classes Grand Rapids West and Holland to Classis Muskegon, stating that they had attended a meeting at which Classis Muskegon decided to proceed with the deposition of Mr. Bultema, and had given their approval to this action.[42] This controversy resulted in some numerical loss to the Christian Reformed Church, since the majority of Mr. Bultema's consistory sided with him. The Berean Church arose out of this schism.[43]

The matter was herewith formally closed. In 1922 Classis Zeeland requested Synod to test the doctrines of Chiliasm in the light of Scripture and the creeds. But this request was denied on the grounds that no "gravamina" had been presented against the creeds touching their Scriptural character on this point.[44]

Thus the Christian Reformed Church refused to depart from its traditional amillennialism. Its adherence to this position must, however, be properly evaluated. Although there was some desire for a Scriptural study of the millennial doctrine, such a study was not made. The objections to making such a study were of a formal nature, both in the case of Mr. Bultema and in the case of Classis Zeeland. The fact that Mr. Bultema forfeited the right to have his views tested by Scripture by failing to present "gravamina" against the creeds is frequently mentioned in the literature of the case. This attitude is, of course, perfectly legitimate, in view of the statement in the Formula of Subscription that the signers believe that all the articles of the Confessions agree fully with the Word of God. But the frequent mention of this consideration serves to emphasize the fact that this was not a basic study of the doctrine in the light of Scripture. It seems also to involve the suggestion that matters might have been different if the proper formal procedure had been followed.

41. Agenda for Synod, 1920, pp. 153-157.
42. Acts of Synod, 1920, pp. 96 f.
43. "The Berean Publishing Committee" of Muskegon, Michigan, published several books in defense of Mr. Bultema's position.
44. Acts of Synod, 1922, p. 76.

The test of premillennial views in the light of Scripture which was not made in this case was narrowly avoided by a recent Synod. Prof. D. H. Kromminga presented a "gravamen" against the Belgic Confession, Art. XXXVII, concerning the specific declaration of that article that the number of the elect must be complete before Christ returns.[45] It was in this connection that the utterances of Reformed fathers on the possibility of creedal revision were quoted.[46] But before the study committee could report on its investigation, the professor passed away. Thereupon the Synod of 1947 decided not to proceed further in the investigation of the matter.[47] In view of the appeal to the creeds alone in the Bultema case and the two unsuccessful attempts to reopen the millennial question to discussion in the light of Scripture, it appears that the matter is not yet finally settled, and there is a distinct possibility of its being reopened in the future.

The second case to which we turn is that of Prof. R. Janssen, Ph. D., who was professor of Old Testament at Calvin Seminary. His case concerns higher criticism, about which several articles had appeared for Christian Reformed readers since 1897.[48] The first complaint was lodged against him in 1919 and appeared at the Synod of 1920.[49] This case began in the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary, called in the Christian Reformed Church, and henceforth in this discussion, the "Curatorium." In 1919 four theological professors brought objections to Dr. Janssen's teaching before the Curatorium.[50] That body expressed its disapproval of the fact that the four professors came to it with their complaint before having seen the accused professor personally about the matter.[51] Having investigated the matter, Curatorium came to the following conclusions:

> a) That the curatorium is satisfied with Dr. Janssen's explanation concerning his view of the inspiration of Holy Scripture;
> b) That the curatorium believes that the complaint and dissatisfaction of the four professors will disappear through brotherly discussion;

45. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 102.
46. Supra, pp. 65 f.
47. Acts of Synod, 1947, p. 37.
48. Cf. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (1897), pp. 450 ff.
This question, in the form of Fundamentalism vs. Modernism, was concerning other denominations at the same time. Its discussion occupied the Baptists and Presbyterians and, to a lesser degree, the Disciples and Methodists.
Cf. W. W. Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York: Harpers, 1939), pp. 568 f.
49. It is interesting to note how this case, which parallels the Briggs case in the Presbyterian Church U. S. A., follows that case by almost thirty years (1893-1922).
50. Acts of Synod, 1920, p. 79.
51. Ibid., p. 79.

c) That Dr. Janssen shall exert himself to avoid anything which might give rise to misunderstanding and shall express himself so clearly in his teaching that all misunderstanding will be prevented.[52]

Having heard this judgment of the case by Curatorium, the four professors were not satisfied, but carried their objections to Synod. The committee appointed by Synod to investigate the matter pointed out that the four professors brought no definite objections to Dr. Janssen's teaching, but asked an investigation.[53] Accordingly, they investigated the matter, and came to conclusions substantially like those of the Curatorium given above.[54] Synod, having heard both sides of the matter, came to its own conclusions. It refused to declare that the four professors ought first to have spoken to Dr. Janssen.[55] It declared that Dr. Janssen had expressed himself very positively as believing in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and that it had not been demonstrated that he taught anything conflicting with the Reformed teaching on that subject. But on the other hand, Dr. Janssen had sometimes laid too much emphasis on the human factor and natural means, so that the divine was obscured. He was advised to show improvement in this respect.[56] The Synod of 1920 left the matter at this point.

The next Synod, in 1922, received thirteen protests and communications on this matter. Of those which were opposed to Dr. Janssen, two were very specific in their charges against his teaching, and cited voluminous evidence of his errors from his "Student Notes."[57] Dr. Janssen was accused of such errors as the following; He "frequently speaks of certain phenomena in the O. T. as 'strengthening' or adding to the credibility of the narrative."[58] He "offers what appears to us as a

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., p. 50.

54. Ibid., pp. 80 f.

55. Ibid., p. 95.

56. Ibid., p. 96.

57. The protest of the Consistory of Broadway Ave., Grand Rapids and the protest of Classis Zeeland. These two protests alone cover 28 pages of the Acts of Synod.
Acts of Synod, 1922, pp. 89-116.

58. "We read on page 7: This marriage practice (of Abraham with his half-sister) corroborates the antiquity and trustworthiness of the narratives; and on page 21: This (i. e. Abraham's acceptance of Sarah's suggestion to raise up a seed by Hagar) strengthens the reliability of the narrative. For 'it was a Babylonian law that if a woman was barren, she was permitted to give her husband a slave-girl of her own, and the children of the slave-girl were then hers'."
Acts of Synod, 1922, p. 90.

rationalistic interpretation of I Chronicles 17."[59] "In his instruction he does not proceed from the organic unity of the Scripture."[60] One of the protests stated further:

> We reiterate the statement that, in our estimation, the question confronting Synod was what Dr. Janssen taught in his classes rather than what he personally believed or in his defense claimed to believe.[61]

Dr. Janssen was instructed to appear before the Synod to give an explanation of his views according to the Formula of Subscription, but refused to do so.[62] Synod therefore had no other choice than to judge according to the available records of the professor's teaching.

On the basis of the "Student and Individual Notes,"[63] Synod adopted five charges against Dr. Janssen. In quoting these charges, we shall abbreviate by omitting the illustrative material taken from the notes.

> I. As regards Professor Janssen's Standpoint and Method, we point to
>
> A. What Prof. Janssen says in his definition of Old Testament Introduction. This definition reads: Old Testament Introduction is the science that treats of the origin and history of the writings which the Christian Church inherited from the Church of the Old Dispensation and with it, on the strength of the testimony of Jesus and the Apostles, accepted as Holy Scriptures.
>
> In this definition the standpoint of faith does not come to light. Such a definition an unbeliever could also employ.
>
> B. What we read concerning the method; . . . Prof. Janssen does, in fact, declare that the object of his empirical, critical search is the origin and history of the writings of the O. T., and these, from the standpoint of faith, cannot as such be the object of empirical, critical investigation.
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> C. What we read in the passage on Science regarding the search after truth. This passage gives the impression that searching after truth is more important than finding it.

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59. "We quote literally: 'David's ambition along political and religious lines runs sky-high. Wishes elaborate structure for ark. Why sudden plans for temple and palace? As proof of power and to gain power. United tribes have risen to world power. Rising to world power carries with it change of religious affairs. David has seen things in other capitols. Especially elaborate temples of Dagon, with galleries. Give him idea for innovations along political and religious lines. David first interrogates instruments of prophecy for religious plans, not regarding palace or other plans. Feels innovation in realm of religion delicate and radical. David warned by Saul's downfall not to come in conflict with the prophets. At first interview prophet says, go ahead. Then hesitation—a vision from Jehovah—and he instructs David to abandon plan. Why is David forbidden to rear temple? Prophets are very conservative."
Acts of Synod, 1922, pp. 91 f.

60. Ibid., p. 112.

61. Ibid., p. 96.

62. Ibid., pp. 30, 33.

63. "As regards the objections raised against the instruction of Prof. Janssen, your Committee met with a great obstacle in the determined refusal of Prof. Janssen to furnish us with his own notes for the correction and supplementation of the Student and Individual Notes. As basis for our investigation we had only the last-named Notes. Concerning their value as a source of knowledge of Prof. Janssen's instruction, your Committee took the position that this instruction is most surely reflected in these Student and Individual Notes . . . "
Ibid., p. 269.

D. What we read in the last paragraph of this passage in which Prof. Janssen again refers to his standpoint. Here the professor fails to show that for the believing searcher of Scripture the prepossession that the Bible is the inspired Word of God does indeed predetermine his conclusion.

II. Although Prof. Janssen does not deny Special Revelation as such, there are nevertheless several instances in which he subjectifies it.

A. Instances in which Prof. Janssen speaks of Special Revelation.

B. Instances wherein Prof. Janssen subjectifies Special Revelation.

III. There are elements in the instruction of Prof. Janssen which cannot be harmonized with the Reformed conception of Inspiration, although the inspiration of Scripture is not denied.

IV. As regards the Organic Unity of the Holy Scripture, little use, as a rule, is made in the Notes of the light which the New Testament sheds on persons and events in the Old Testament. Scripture is seldom compared with Scripture. Consequently a very objectionable presentation is sometimes given of those persons and events.

V. Against some of the Dogmatic Views, as presented in the Notes, we have serious objections.

A. Passages in which Prof. Janssen seems to take an Evolutionistic standpoint.

B. Passages which seem to indicate that Prof. Janssen takes an Ethical standpoint.[64]

C. As regards miracles we remark that though Prof. Janssen does speak of supernatural elements in miracles, there is nevertheless an attempt to naturalize miracles in order not to meet with conflict from the side of science. In this manner a false standard is applied as if miracles must conform to the demands of science.[65]

Upon the basis of those charges, Synod took the following action:

(1) Whereas is has become evident that the instruction of Prof. Janssen, as reflected in the "Students' and Individual Notes," is unreformed in character, and

(2) Whereas, Prof. Janssen, through insubordination on his part, has made it impossible for Synod in its investigation to go back of the Student Notes,

Your committee judges that Synod is called to the sad task of deposing Prof. Janssen from his office, in accordance with the Formula of Subscription . . .[66]

The Synod of 1924 received sixteen protests against this action from various individuals and consistories.[67] In all of these disputed points, the Synod of 1924 declared itself to be in full agreement with its predecessor.[68] One of the most persistent objections was that the accusers of Dr. Janssen had not followed the disciplinary rule of Matthew

64. Indirect reference is here made to "De Ethischen," or "The Ethicals," a religious development in Holland. "This movement sought to transfer Christianity from the purely religious to the ethical sphere by bringing forward the moral side of the supernatural concepts of the Christian doctrines, and thus to transform doctrine into truth and life." Kromminga, op. cit., p. 114.
65. Acts of Synod, 1922, pp. 270-277.
66. Ibid., p. 278.
67. Acts of Synod, 1924, pp. 161-163.
68. Ibid., pp. 189-191.

18 in first speaking personally with the accused.[69] The protests received contained no defense of the teaching of the professor, but were against the formal procedure of the Synod in trying and deposing him.

This case is the first measurable indication of the impact of liberalism upon the Christian Reformed Church. This influence was felt at a vital point, the seminary where all future Christian Reformed ministers were instructed. The first reaction to the liberal teaching came from the colleagues of the professor, but when once the matter had been brought to the light, the churches lent abundant support to the opposition to such instruction. It became apparent that the Christian Reformed Church was not willing to have the slightest shadow of doubt cast upon the infallibility of the Bible. A member of the Synodical Committee for this case in 1922[70] writes concerning it:

> The committee had worked on the case almost through all the sessions of Synod, and those sessions in which the decisions were taken were tense with excitement; but there was no widespread and emphatic dissent.[81]

That the Formula of Subscription was considered authoritative and binding is clearly evident from this case.

Further evidence of an unwillingess to allow even the suspicion of Modernism in the Christian Reformed Church is seen in the Wezeman case of 1936-1937. This case involved no open or avowed Modernism, but only the suspicion of errant teachings. A significant description of false doctrine is found in the literature of the case:

> False doctrines are teachings that run contrary to the Bible and our Confessional Standards. The teaching of false doctrine need not necessarily be intentional and deliberate, but may also be unintentional. However, the one type readily passes into the other when persisted in after the erroneous teachings have been pointed out.[72]

In this case, the errors were not deliberate, according to the statement of Dr. Wezeman himself.[73] When Synod by a clear majority agreed that those teachings were erroneous, and thus "pointed them out," their author repudiated them.[74] Thus the description given above proved very useful and applicable in this case.

The name of Dr. Wezeman had been before the Synods of 1932 and 1934 in a matter only remotely connected with this case. From 1921 to

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69. Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 166. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1922, pp. 123 f.
70. The Rev. D. H. Kromminga, member of the committee in an advisory capacity. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1922, p. 6.
71. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 145.
72. Agenda for Synod, 1936, p. 66.
73. Statement of Dr. Wezeman. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1937, pp. 262-268.
74. Ibid.

1927 he had been Professor of History and Literature at Grundy College.[75] In 1927 he accepted an appointment to be Principal and Teacher of Bible at the Chicago Christian High School. His ministerial credentials, however, remained in the hands of Classis Ostfriesland, in Iowa. In 1932 that classis asked Synod for advice with respect to his ministerial status, "since Classis feels constrained to discontinue his ministerial status at this time."[76] In 1934, Synod decided that if he were engaged only as a teacher of Bible, his ministerial status could be continued; but since his principalship of a high school did not pertain to the Ministry of the Gospel, and since that constituted a large share of his activities, his ministerial status should not be continued if he desired to retain that position.[77] The matter was settled by Dr. Wezeman's acceptance of a call as associate pastor of the Fourth Christian Reformed Church of Chicago in 1937.

In the meanwhile, suspicions had arisen concerning his teaching. Several consistories of Classis Illinois sent overtures to the classis, accusing Dr. Wezeman of teaching Modernism, and requesting that classis "discontinue recommending the support of the Chicago Christian High School to the Churches of Chicago and vicinity."[78] Classis Illinois decided "to leave the relation of the Classis to the High School *in statu quo* until the September meeting of the Classis."[79] This decision of the classis was appealed to Synod, a body which for stated reasons declared "that it was inconsistent on the part of Classis Illinois to leave the matter *in statu quo,* and leave our people in doubt, while it should in such a serious matter as the education of our youth have taken a definite stand and sounded a serious warning against what is conceived to be the destructive influence of Modernism."[80] This matter did not concern the person or teaching of Dr. Wezeman directly, but might be called, "Synod *vs.* the Classis of Illinois."

One of the consistories of Classis Illinois, however, overtured Synod on the basis of the information brought to light in this case, to "sound

75. Grundy College, Grundy Center, Iowa, was operated for some years under the auspices of Classis Ostfriesland of the Christian Reformed Church. See further discussion of this school in Chapter V.

76. Acts of Synod, 1932, p. 59.

77. Acts of Synod, 1934, p. 17.

78. Acts of Synod, 1936. Notice incidentally the weapon of withdrawal of financial support in preserving the orthodox character of the society-managed Christian schools.

79. Acts of Synod, 1936, p. 94.

80. Ibid., p. 95.

a strong note of warning against modernistic teachings and trends."[81] Synod declined to publish such a testimony,[82] but decided "that the Rev. F. H. Wezeman has given sufficient grounds of suspicion to require of him a further explanation of his sentiments respecting some points of doctrine (cf. Formula of Subscription)."[83]

That investigation was conducted at the Synod of 1937. The following charges against the teaching of Dr. Wezeman were sustained by a large majority of Synod:

> I. There are passages in the Notes of Dr. Wezeman which contain manifestations of a false, evolutionistic view of the development of revelation and of the religion of Israel.
>
> II. There are passages in the Notes of Dr. Wezeman which contain manifestations of a naturalistic view of revelation.
>
> III. There are passages in the Notes of Dr. Wezeman which contain representations contrary to the Word of God.
>
> IV. There are passages in the Notes of Dr. Wezeman which are manifestations of a purely ethical representation of the way of salvation which is not in harmony with our Confession nor with Scripture.[84]

After a brief consideration of these charges, Dr. Wezeman presented the following statement:

> Esteemed Brethren;
>
> I am in receipt of your communication. You are aware of the fact that I have repeatedly stated that my Bible Courses do contain a few statements that are erroneous. Synod condemns those passages. I sub-

81. Overture of Roseland IV, Acts of Synod, 1936, p. 139.

82. Acts of Synod, 1936, pp. 139-140. The proposed testimony is recorded in the Acts of Synod, and reads as follows:

"The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, in session at Grand Rapids, Michigan, in June, 1936, strongly warns all our churches, and particularly the officers of the churches and those who are in any way responsible for the supervision of the religious instruction of our children and young people, to be on the alert against the subtle intrusion of the pernicious tendencies and teachings of Modernism in the instruction of our children and young people. It is deeply convinced that the doctrinal teachings of Modernism are fundamentally un-Christian and subversive of the basic truths of our Reformed Confession and of the sound doctrine that is committed to the care of the Church of Jesus Christ. They are not based on the Word of God, but rooted in an anti-Christian philosophy. They may not always clearly express, but certainly do invariably involve a denial, not merely of peripheral truths, but of the most fundamental doctrines embodied in the Confessions of the Church of all ages. And in many instances they openly disavow the fundamentals of our faith. Since Modernism is always subtle in its approach and often does not arouse suspicion and opposition until it has made considerable advance, has wiped out all lines of distinction, and has engendered a feeling of religious indifference, it is of the utmost importance that we should be on our guard against and should strongly oppose even the first appearances of it in our circles. We should jealously guard our precious heritage by a careful supervision of all Bible teachings in our churches, Sunday Schools, societies, and schools for Christian instruction. Synod is deeply appreciative of the fact that up to the present time these agencies have been singularly free from the encroachments of this subtle and pernicious influence, and feels that it would be nothing short of a calamity if the very agencies established for the purpose of giving our children and young people a truly Christian education, in harmony with our Reformed conception of the truth, should become the channels through which a pagan Modernism filters into our homes and churches. Let us heed the apostolic admonition; "Hold the pattern of sound words, which thou has heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." II Tim. 1:13"

The motion was made and carried that publication of this testimony be indefinitely postponed.

83. Acts of Synod, 1936, p. 146.

84. Acts of Synod, 1937, pp. 106-115.

> scribe to the judgment passed upon these passages by Synod and herewith repudiate the teaching condemned therein as being contrary to the Word of God and the Confession.
>
> Signed, F. H. Wezeman.[85]

Synod, by an overwhelming majority, declared itself satisfied with this confession.[86]

This case does not rank in importance with the Janssen case. It does, however, lend support to certain conclusions respecting the orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church. The Formula of Subscription is again seen as a highly important document with respect to that orthodoxy. What is even more important is the evident willingness of the Christian Reformed Church to apply the requirements and threatened punishments of that Formula in a very strict and uncompromising manner. It is further evident that not only adherence to the teachings of Modernism, but even tendencies in that direction were considered valid grounds for investigation and condemnation of the teaching of a signer of the Formula.

The Christian Reformed Church defended itself not only against Premillennialism and Modernism, but also against a distorted interpretation of the Reformed Standards.[87] This was done in the Common Grace controversy, which was dealt with at the Synods of 1924 and 1926. Two causes may be singled out as leading to this controversy. On the one hand, Dr. Abraham Kuyper had given prominence to a certain grace of God shown to all men, apart from His special grace shown only to the elect. This matter had been discussed in his *Stone Lectures on Calvinism*[88] and in his own periodical in the Netherlands, which had many readers here.[89] His discussion of this subject provoked considerable debate and aroused some difference of opinion. Another contributing cause was the rising danger of worldliness felt by the Christian Reformed Church. The isolation of that church[90] had received a serious blow in the advancing Americanization of the Christian Reformed

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85. Ibid., p. 115.
86. Ibid.
87. The position which was rejected is described as one-sided.
Cf. Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 147.
88. "Dr. A. Kuyper in his 'Stone Lectures on Calvinism' had defined common grace in distinction from particular grace, which works unto salvation, as something 'by which God, maintaining the life of the world, relaxes the curse which rests upon it, arrests its process of corruption, and thus allows the untrammeled development of our life in which to glorify Himself as Creator' (p. 57, 186, 2nd. ed.)."
H. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church, 1946 ed., p. 108.
89. Cf. an article on common grace in De Heraut, reprinted in De Wachter, Vol. XXX, no. 44 (Dec. 22, 1897), p. 1.
90. Infra, Chapter IV.

people at the time of World War I. Synod was beginning to deal with the problem of worldly amusements on which it issued a declaration in 1928.[91] Some men felt constrained to manifest their reaction to worldliness by emphasizing special grace exclusively and denying the existence of such a thing as a common grace of God. The danger of a tendency to worldliness in the emphasis on common grace was recognized even by Kuyper and by the Synodical Committee which prepared the report recognizing common grace.[92]

Reaction to the propagation of a teaching of common grace centered in two prominent ministers of the Christian Reformed Church. The Rev. Herman Hoeksema and the Rev. H. Danhof both wrote and spoke against this doctrine. Some of the opposition to common grace appeared in a regular column, "Our Faith," in *The Banner*.[93] Further publicity was given to the views of these two men in two books, *Van Zonde en Genade,* and *Niet Doopersch Maar Gereformeerd.* Agitation on this point reached such a pitch that several classes found it necessary to send overtures on the matter to the Synod of 1924. Classes Hackensack, Sioux Center, Hudson, and Muskegon all asked a thorough study of the problem, with a view to clearer formulation of the matter. One of these classes declared that the denial was contrary to the Formulas of Unity (the three Confessional Standards), while another asked Synod to declare that such a denial was contrary to Scripture and Reformed Doctrine.[94]

The advisory committee appointed by Synod listed eleven disputed points which were contained in the overtures and appeals which were sent to Synod.[95] For reasons of polity the committee declined to investigate all of these points.[96] Attention was fixed upon three matters of basic dispute: the gracious disposition of God toward all men, and not alone toward the elect; the restraint of sin in the life of the individual and in the life of society; and the performance of so-called

91. Acts of Synod, 1928, pp. 86-89.
92. "When Dr. Kuyper wrote his monumental work on this subject, he showed himself to be aware already of the danger that some might be misled thereby into losing themselves in the world."
Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 148.
"And history has shown that this danger is not merely imaginary. Dr. Bavinck has also pointed to that danger in his Dogmatiek."
Ibid.
93. Agenda for Synod, 1922, p. xvi.
94. Agenda for Synod, 1924, pp. xxvi f.
95. Acts of Synod, 1924, pp. 121 f.
96. Ibid., pp. 122-124.

civic righteousness by the unregenerate.[97] Some of the delegates advised a cautious procedure, arguing that Synod was not prepared to make a final judgment on this matter. A proposition was discussed which advised that Synod be content with instructing the churches to make a basic study of this matter. But this proposition was rejected.[98]

Synod then proceeded to recognize, by official declaration, the existence of a grace of God shown to all men, the restraint of sin by the general work of the Holy Spirit, and the ability of unregenerate men to do acts of so-called civic righteousness,[99] citing proof from Scripture and the Confessions.[100] The assembly further declared the utterances of the Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema to be out of harmony with the Bible and the Confessions on those three points, although it recognized the fact that these men desired to be nothing but Reformed, and basically were Reformed, with a tendency to one-sidedness.[101] It further admonished the brethren to abide by the teaching of the Standards on these points in their preaching and writing.[102]

Seven protests against this decision were submitted before the close of this Synod.[103] The protest of the Rev. H. Danhof, who was a delegate to this Synod, was the most explicit and the most significant. He questioned the ability of this Synod to deal competently with this problem, complained that the position which he and the Rev. Hoeksema had adopted had not been fairly represented, and argued from Scripture and the Confessions that the decisions of Synod were erroneous. Most significant of all, he served notice that he felt in duty bound not alone to enter a formal protest, but to take practical steps to combat these decisions.[104]

The two ministers whose views had been condemned carried out this threat of the use of practical measures by the issuance of a periodical in defense of their views.[105] As a result, Classis Grand Rapids East took disciplinary measures against Mr. Hoeksema, and Classis Grand Rapids West against Mr. Danhof and the Rev. G. M. Ophoff, on the grounds

97. Ibid., p. 124.
98. Ibid., pp. 143-145.
99. This decision was henceforth referred to in official documents and unofficial discussions as "the three points."
100. Acts of Synod, 1924, pp. 145-147.
101. Ibid., p. 147.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid., pp. 192-199.
104. Protest of the Rev. H. Danhof, Acts of Synod, 1924, pp. 194-199.
105. The Standard Bearer, now the official organ of the Protestant Reformed Church.

of their refusal to abide by the explicit declaration and admonition of the Synod of 1924. The three ministers then seceded, together with a large portion of their respective churches.[106] There was widespread sympathy with their position. The extent of this sympathy is seen in the fact that the Synod of 1926 received forty-five protests and appeals concerning this matter.[107] The Protestant Reformed Church which arose out of this schism gained adherents in other sections of the Christian Reformed Church, especially in Michigan and Iowa. This group represents the largest numerical loss suffered by the Christian Reformed Church in the course of its history.[108]

This controversy sheds some interesting light on the orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church. It indicates a desire on the part of that church to retain a balanced view of Scripture, Reformed doctrine, and the life of the Church.[109] There was a determined attempt in this matter to adhere to the sixteenth and seventeenth century standards of the Reformed Church. Direct appeal was made to them. In view of the results of the controversy, it must be said that orthodoxy here had a broadening effect on a small and strict denomination. This is interesting, in view of the fact that many critics consider such strict adherence to these great symbols a mark of narrowness. There was a deliberate refusal to allow the Arminian overemphasis on common grace[110] to force the Christian Reformed Church to the opposite extreme of denying that grace altogether. One of the accusations against the Rev.

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106. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 146.

107. Acts of Synod, 1926, pp. 110-113.

108. Statistics of the Protestant Reformed Church listed at present are the following:

Classis East			
Churches	12	Ministers	12
Michigan	9	Families	841
Illinois	2	Individuals	131
Wisconsin	1	Total souls	3576
Classis West			
Churches	11	Minnesota	1
California	2	Ministers	11
Iowa	7	Families	313
Montana	1	Total Souls	1450
Denomination			
Churches	23	Individuals	131
Ministers	23	Total Souls	5026
Families	1154		

Statistics for 1947, courtesy of the Rev. Walter Hoffman.

109. The decisions of the Synod of 1924 embody both a condemnation of the errors of the Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof and an admonition to the churches to guard against the dangers against which these brethren warned.
Acts of Synod, 1924, pp. 147-150.

110. Common grace, according to the Arminians, is quite sufficient to enable the sinner to turn to God in faith and repentance and to do spiritual good.
Cf. Berkhof, op. cit., II, p. 24.

Hoeksema, into which the Synod of 1924 declined to enter, concerned his "insufficient Gospel preaching."[111] The charge was that he preached only for the elect, implicitly denying the sincerity of the Gospel call to the unconverted. Another charge which was entered, but not formally considered, was that those who denied common grace did serious injustice to the Scriptural doctrine of human responsibility.[112] The Christian Reformed Church has found it necessary to guard consistently against a tendency to hyper-orthodoxy by way of reaction against Arminianism.[113] The very size of the seceding Protestant Reformed Church is an indication of the hold which such a tendency had upon the members of the Christian Reformed Church. The outcome of the controversy also indicates the willingness of the Church as a whole to abide by the decisions of its Synod. The physical property involved was awarded by the civil courts or left by mutual consent to the groups which remained in the Christian Reformed Church.[114]

It is worthy of note that all three of these doctrinal problems came to the attention of Synod in the brief period, 1918-1924. In some cases, one Synod was called upon to deal with aspects of two of these problems. To a certain extent this undoubtedly reflects the Americanization of the church, which was proceeding at a rapid pace just at that time. That process served both to bring to an end the exclusive preoccupation of the Christian Reformed people with specifically Dutch problems and to allow the impact of their American environment to strike them with concentrated force. It is certainly a tribute to the strength of this church's orthodoxy that it could withstand such diverse influences in so short a period with so little actual change.

We turn our attention briefly to still another object of ecclesiastical action. The problem of baptized membership (the so-called "doopledenstelsel") is not, strictly speaking, a matter of doctrinal orthodoxy. It does, however, have implications with respect to the doctrinal knowledge of the church members, and undoubtedly also some influence in keeping the church orthodox.

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111. Protest of the Rev. J. Van der Mey against his minister. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 139.

112. Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 121.

113. "One of the mischievous ideas which seem to be current among our people is that a Calvinist is one who believes only in divine sovereignty while an Arminian places all emphasis on human responsibility."
Rev. H. J. Kuiper, editorial, "Can We Be Calvinistic and Arminian," in The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (June 13, 1947), p. 740.

114. Cf. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church, 1946 ed., p. 91.

The problem may be described as being in large measure a parallel to the "Half-Way Covenant" problem in the New England Churches of the Colonial period. In both cases the problem was complicated at first by the connection of church membership with civic privileges. Under the conditions resulting from the reorganization of 1816, many churches in the Netherlands had granted to non-confessing members of the church the privilege of having their children baptized.[115] The leaders of the Secession of 1834 were divided in their opinion of this practice. Scholte opposed such baptisms, and De Cock freely baptized children of non-confessing members.[116] The immigrants took the problem with them to the United States. Before the Secession of 1857, Classis Holland expressed itself on this problem, continuing the practice derived from the Netherlands.[117] There was a considerable discussion of this practice in the early volumes of *De Wachter.*[118] The general tone of these articles was one of disapproval of the practice.[119] The Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands was also dealing with this problem, and developments there were closely watched.[120]

The practice of baptizing children of non-confessing members, whether in the Christian Reformed Church or received from other denominations,[121] had received formal recognition in the "General Rules" adopted by the Synod of 1880.[122] The Synod of 1894 received three overtures specifically requesting reformation in this matter.[123] The committee agreed with the appellants that "it was not right to regulate a forbidden practice."[124] They advised a cautious procedure until the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands had reached its awaited decision in this matter.[125] But they did declare that there was no room in the Church for baptized adults who persistently refused to make confession of faith. They advised that such people, after repeated admonition, be excommunicated. Synod so decided.[126] The Synods of 1898

115. Beets, **The Christian Reformed Church**, 1943 ed., p. 75.
116. Kromminga, op. cit., pp. 95 f.
117. **Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858**, p. 116.
118. **De Wachter**, Vol. IX, no. 11 (August 17, 1876), p. 2.
119. **De Wachter**, Vol. X, no. 25, (February 28, 1878), p. 3.
120. Report of committee on this question in the Netherlands printed in **De Wachter**, Vol. XIII, no. 5 (May 20, 1880), p. 1.
121. **Acts of Synod**, 1894, p. 15.
122. Beets, **The Christian Reformed Church**, 1946 ed., p. 95.
123. **Acts of Synod**, 1894, p. 15.
124. Ibid., p. 16.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid., pp. 16, f.

and 1900 reaffirmed this stand without taking any substantial steps toward the further solution of the problem.[127]

The decisive step was taken by the Synod of 1902. That body declared that the rights of the Sacrament of Baptism should no longer be granted to baptized members as they were to those who were bound to the Church both by baptism and confession. Grounds for this action were: that this practice was in conflict with the sanctity of the congregation of the Lord; that it conflicted with the veracity which ought to mark the service of the Lord, in that it provided no objective grounds for addressing such people as "Beloved in the Lord;" that it was in conflict with the holiness of Baptism.[128]

It was felt that the change thus instituted should not be too abrupt, but that the individuals involved should be given time to make the proper adjustment. At the same time, the Synod showed that it was in earnest in this decision by instructing the classes to make regular inquiries whether this synodical decision was being observed.[129] This rule of inquiry by the classes remained in force until 1936, when the Synod declared it obsolete and dropped it.[130]

The overtures requesting reformation in this matter consistently argued that thus the practice of the Christian Reformed Church would be brought into line with the ancient practice of the Reformed Churches.[131] It was felt that the practice inherited from the Dutch State Church was a weakening and a corruption of the position of the Reformed fathers. Thus a real orthodoxy, as distinguished from a mere satisfaction with tradition, was manifested. Although primarily a practical problem, this question contained doctrinal elements. Foremost among them was the proper understanding and interpretation of the Covenant of Grace.

The settlement of this question had a salutary effect on the relationship of confessing membership to total membership. Between 1900 and 1910 the number of families increased 41%, as did the number of souls (total membership). During the same period, the number of communicant members increased 87%. To use another standard of comparison, there were 1.5 communicant members for every family in

127. Acts of Synod, 1898, pp. 74-76. Acts of Synod, 1900, pp. 61 f.
128. Acts of Synod, 1902, p. 65.
129. Ibid., p. 66.
130. Acts of Synod, 1936, p. 93.
131. Cf. overtures of Classis Holland and Classis Iowa. Acts of Synod, 1894, p. 15.

1900. But by 1920 the ratio had grown to 2.3 communicant members for every church family.[132] A certain measure of doctrinal knowledge is required of every applicant for communicant membership. In this respect, there has been no noticeable lowering of the standards, either at the time of the controversy over baptized members, or since that time. Thus the efforts of the church to gain a well-informed and active membership received substantial assistance from the proper settlement of this question.

The formal standards and official actions of a church are by no means the only criteria of its orthodoxy and the vitality of its spiritual life. But they are, on the other hand, certainly not to be disregarded. In these respects, the leaders of the Christian Reformed Church showed a high degree of devotion to the cause of orthodoxy. They were abundantly supported in this by the membership of the church in general. The importance of the ecclesiastical action in matters of dispute can be fully appreciated only when one permits his imagination to weigh what might have happened if the agreement of the church on the questions involved had been less complete. A high valuation was set on orthodoxy in the decisions taken. One might almost call it the *sine qua non* for any of the general decisions. The church was orthodox, proud of its orthodoxy, and desirous of keeping it unchanged.

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The orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church is regulated by the Word of God, as interpreted by the three historic Reformed Confessional Standards. The Formula of Subscription provides for rigid adherence to these standards, with provision for formal change through specified channels. The only changes brought about in the history of the Christian Reformed Church were a revision of Article XXXVI of the Belgic Confession and the adoption of the Conclusions of Utrecht. The church courts were active in enforcing this orthodoxy. Between 1918 and 1924 they defended the orthodox position against a departure from the traditional amillenarian position, the impact of liberalism, and a unilateral interpretation of the Reformed faith. They also brought the practice of the church into line with the

132. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1900, p. 42. Yearbook, 1910, p. 32; Yearbook, 1920, p. 21.
Cf. a table given in Kromminga, op. cit., p. 120.

Confessions and with ancient Reformed practice in the matter of baptized members. In these transactions an orthodox spirit on the part of the church as a whole and a high degree of unanimity of opinion came to clear manifestation.

CHAPTER IV

Deliberate Cultural and Ecclesiastical Isolation

Speaking of conditions on the American frontier, Mode says:

> Cheap land and isolation have proved the economic and social bulwarks of many struggling religious bodies. By these they have been nursed into stability and vigor.[1]

The preservation of the orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church was aided greatly by a high degree of isolation from its American environment. The Dutch immigrants of 1847 and thereafter were isolated from surrounding influences by the foreign language which they spoke.

The dangers to the Reformed tradition envisaged by the Christian Reformed people were far from imaginary. There were real forces in the American scene which worked for change in theological outlook. These were more or less consciously resisted by the Christian Reformed Church. We shall present a brief and general statement of the nature and tendency of those forces. The nature of the problem is seen from the fact that at the time of the American Revolution American Christianity was predominantly Calvinistic. Today it is certainly not that at all. Calvinism today is a distinct minority in the American ecclesiastical scene. What influence it has results not first of all from numerical strength, but from other considerations. What forces produced this decided change in the character of American Christianity?

We shall mention three such forces. The first is Pietism. The frontier and semi-frontier conditions which prevailed throughout most of American history greatly fostered Pietism, since they provided an environment peculiarly suited to its methods and views. The phase of Pietism which is most symbolic of its influence in America is the revival. Some aspects of the revival are a peculiarly American development. This influence made a great impact on American religious views

1. P. G. Mode, The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1923), p. 98.

during the formative years of the American church. It is significant that when a reaction to Pietism and revivalism was experienced, it was not always in the direction of the older views, but often in the direction of Modernism.

The second force making for change in the American scene is Activism. The frontier was again a great influence in this respect. The American environment demanded, and hence fostered, a practical bent of mind, which was carried over from other spheres to the religious. An important implication of this development is the idea that theological truth has only a relative value; practical considerations come to have the determinative voice. Obviously there are some good results from such an emphasis, but the dangers which it presents to traditional systems of truth are almost equally obvious. If an immigrant group is to have its system benefit rather than suffer from this influence, it must be clearly aware of the problem and exercise sharp discrimination between progressive and corrupting tendencies.

The third force making for change is the continuing influence in American life of the ideas of the Enlightenment. Under such influences, democracy is fostered, and reason is crowned as queen. These ideas become part of "Americanization" because of their peculiar influence in American life in general. American political democracy was formed under the influence of these ideas, and their implications are written into basic American documents and reflected in basic American attitudes. The Enlightenment is thus far more than a passing phase in American life. Old theological ideas are inevitably forced into some changes through existence in such an environment as this. Through this influence, as also through the others mentioned above, the door was opened in many cases for the advance of Modernism.

The impact of such forces upon theological systems becomes apparent when European immigrants join American churches which have the same historic standards. Very often the result is a tension between the more conservative immigrants and the more liberal older settlers. Thus Scandinavian immigrants exercised a conservative influence in the Lutheran Church in the decade preceding the Civil War. It is safe to say that the Dutch immigrants of 1847 who remained in the Reformed Church in America played a similar role in that body. Our purpose is to see how the Christian Reformed Church, as a sepa-

rate group composed almost entirely of immigrants, handled the problems and resisted the forces of Americanization.

Other foreign language groups shared this sort of isolation, of course. But certain considerations make this isolation a matter of peculiar importance in the case of these particular people. Its effect was increased by their settlement in homogeneous, self-sufficient communities.[2] It was deliberately fostered by the leaders of the church. It carried over into the realm of official relations with the American secular and ecclesiastical environment. And it endured throughout a critical period during which liberalizing influences on other American denominations were especially strong.

The majority of the people who formed the Christian Reformed Church were certainly not ashamed of the fact that they spoke a foreign language. Perhaps the implications of their being a religious minority carried over to their attitude to their language. They were inclined to view the language difference as a blessing rather than as a handicap. They had seen influences at work in the Netherlands which they considered corrupting. They were thankful for anything which would prevent such corruption here. In such a vein, a writer in *De Wachter* advised parents to instruct their children in the Dutch language,[3] and followed this article with another in which he maintained that instruction of children in the Dutch language is (a) nothing to be ashamed of, (b) useful, and (c) necessary.[4]

The leaders and people alike were genuinely afraid of the effects of a loss of this isolation. One writer recalled that many leaders in the Netherlands with whom he had spoken before he left had not considered the American atmosphere healthy for the Reformed faith. He expressed himself as agreeing with their sentiments.[5] Another writer spoke in similar vein, "My greatest fear about America was that our Reformed people would pass over into a shallow Methodism."[6]

It was generally assumed that the adult immigrants themselves would

2. "Maybe their religious views impose customs that in the vogue of more fashionable society seem peculiar and are likely to provoke ridicule. Why suffer embarrassment under the eye of neighbors whose scorn or complacent toleration indicated only a worldly attitude of mind? Why not get away from worldly-minded people, and in some new settlement, maintain unchallenged and unquestioned what a sensitive conscience imposes?"
Ibid., p. 182.
3. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 19 (December 9, 1875), p. 3.
4. Ibid., no. 25 (March 2, 1876), p. 2.
5. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (1897), p. 10.
6. Ibid., p. 146.

continue to use their mother tongue.[7] But great concern was felt lest the children fail to preserve the Dutch language. Much was written concerning their education in this respect. We select a few representative articles for mention. One writer cited three reasons for establishing schools in which Dutch would be the language of instruction. The reasons were that thus the parents could assist in the education of their own children, catechetical instruction could be included in the school curriculum, and the Dutch language could be preserved.[8] A later writer pleaded for Christian school instruction in the Dutch language in order to preserve purity of doctrine through attendance at Dutch services.[9] Still later, an article appeared in which it became evident that the preservation of the Dutch language was the prime consideration in the establishment of Christian schools, at least in the estimation of the writer.[10] The language question was viewed in relationship to the home as well as the church. It was argued that parental authority would be lost if the children were instructed in a strange language.[11]

There was some modification in this attitude in course of time. In 1892, instruction in both English and Dutch was advocated.[12] The ideal then envisaged was to teach the children both Dutch and English so well that they would be able to understand a highly technical sermon in either language.[13] By 1902 the adjustment had progressed still farther. Then it was argued that both Dutch and English should be taught, but with English as the basic language of instruction, and Dutch taught as a foreign language.[14]

The formal instruction of the children in the Dutch language was only part, although a most important part, of the general attempt to preserve the use of the mother tongue. Other influences worked in the same direction. The original leaders of the immigrants had deliberately

7. The validity of this assumption is clear from the experience of the group, in the writer's present congregation there are three elderly people who cannot speak English. They were all adults at the time of immigration. The same situation is duplicated in most Christian Reformed communities. Generally speaking, the women learned English less readily than the men, having less contact with outside influences.
8. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 14 (September 30, 1875), p. 1.
9. De Wachter, Vol. XV, no. 35 (November 16, 1882), p. 1.
10. De Wachter, Vol. XVII, no. 1 (March 12, 1884), p. 2.
It is difficult to determine just how far the desire to perpetuate the Dutch language entered into the support of the Christian schools. It was generally true, however, that the individuals most zealous in preserving the Dutch language and culture were also the most ardent supporters of the Christian schools.
11. De Wachter, Vol. XIX, no. 10 (May 12, 1886), pp. 2 f.
12. De Wachter, Vol. XXIV, no. 15 (June 10, 1891), p. 3.
13. De Wachter, Vol. XXV, no. 12 (May 18, 1892), p. 1.
14. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. V (1902), pp. 266 ff.

planned to bring their followers to America in close-knit groups, to prevent scattering, and thus to serve their religious purposes. Measures were taken to continue this practice. In spite of a shortage of ministers, a home missionary, the Rev. T. Van den Bosch, was engaged in 1879 to seek out the immigrants and encourage their settlement in established Christian Reformed communities.[15]

As a result of such deliberate effort and natural affinity, communities arose in which the immigrants found it quite unnecessary to learn the English language.[16] Such communities arose not only in various areas of Western Michigan,[17] but also in Paterson and Passaic, New Jersey,[18] the Chicago area,[19] the vicinity of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and various localities in Iowa.[20] It was said that in 1898 there were 25,000 Dutch in Grand Rapids out of a total population of 100,000.[21] Those who refused to join the clearly Dutch settlements did not figure at all in religious affairs. This is not surprising, since their refusal to co-operate was itself a sign of religious indifference.

Other influences also had a distinct bearing on the continued use of Dutch. The immigrants found an abundant choice of newspapers in their own language.[22] In response to the arguments noted above, most communities established Christian schools where Dutch was the language of instruction. Sunday School lessons were printed in Dutch in *De Wachter*.[23] Catechetical instruction was exclusively in Dutch, as were the church services for a long period of time.

From a social standpoint, this deliberate preservation of the use of the Dutch language was, to say the least, not altogether praiseworthy. Some reaction was felt to it. Much of the criticism came from ardent "Americanizers" among the immigrants themselves. The leaders occasionally had to defend the people against the charge that they desired to have a little Holland in America.[24]

15. De Wachter, Vol. XIII, no. 10 (July 22, 1880), p. 3.
16. This situation changed most slowly in the semi-rural communities. For example, in such a community as Sioux Center, Iowa, one may still transact all of his business with the use of the Dutch language if he so desires.
17. E. g. Holland, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Muskegon, Michigan.
18. The Prospect Park section of Paterson is frequently referred to as "Dutch Hill."
19. Van den Bosch, op. cit., is an interesting account of the Chicago settlement.
20. The story is told of one resident of Northwest Iowa that he was proud of the fact that, although American-born, he could not speak a complete sentence in English.
21. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. II (1898), p. 460.
22. Supra, p. 44.
23. De Wachter, Vol. XXI, no. 39 (Dec. 5, 1888) and following numbers.
24. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (1897), foreword, pp. 2 f.

There was indeed a genuine fear of "Americanization," but in fairness to the immigrants, that term requires definition. This fear of Americanization was not such as to forbid the assumption of civic responsibilities or the participation in civic affairs. *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan* carried a long series of articles on the governmental system and history of the United States,[25] which practice *De Wachter* reflected to a lesser degree.[26] The visit of Dr. A. Kuyper to the United States prompted the formation of an "Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond" (General Dutch Society) for political action.[27] The immigrants were quick to join one political party or another. Before the Civil War most of them, like their neighbors in the "Old Northwest," were anti-slavery Democrat. After the Civil War, most of the Dutch immigrants were Republican, although those in Iowa remained predominantly Democrat. This explanation is given for the switch to the Republican party:

> To ascertain the reason why the Dutch in Chicago, unlike their kin in Michigan and Iowa, have always been Republican, it should be noted that the Dutch settlement of Chicago dates practically from after the Civil War, and that the sentiment of the people of the Netherlands was unqualifiedly on the side of the North, Abraham Lincoln being considered by them one of the greatest emancipators of modern times and placed in the same category as William of Orange, the "Father of their Country."[28]

The Americanization which was feared was rather the loss of religious beliefs and customs through contact with the American environment. In an article on "Our Church and the Spirit of our Country," a writer remarks about the "methodistic" spirit of American religion and the idea that religion is a matter of the feelings only. He therefore contends that the Christian Reformed Church must hold to the inspiration of the Word, Catechism preaching, catechetical instruction, and the Christian school.[29] The people in general made the requirements for preserving religious purity more far-reaching. One student says:

> The older people somehow connected up their Calvinism with the language, and feared that the loss of the one would inevitably mean the loss of the other. They were afraid that with Americanization they would lose their distinct principles. On the same ground they opposed all ritual and even the use of flowers.[30]

25. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. III (1899), pp. 41 ff., 271 ff.
26. De Wachter, passim.
27. De Wachter, Vol. XXXIII, nos. 23, 24 (July 26 and Aug. 2, 1899).
28. Van den Bosch, op. cit., "Notes by the Committee on Publication," note 4, p. 101. Cf. De Wachter, Vol. XXXIII, no. 23, 24 (July 26 and Aug. 2, 1899), p. 1. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. III (1899), p. 58.
29. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. IX (1905), pp. 291 ff.
30. Van den Bosch, op. cit., p. 25.

We may also mention briefly the affinity felt for the mother country. We have already noted the close attention paid to the opinion of Dutch religious leaders on disputed points.[31] News of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands was carried regularly in *De Wachter.* That paper published the agenda for the Synod of the Dutch parent church.[32] Ecclesiastical developments in the Netherlands were watched with great interest.[33] The crowning of the youthful Dutch queen was greeted with rejoicing. But the same article loyally defended the new country against Dutch criticism.[34] The loyalty to Dutch people throughout the world is seen in the deep sympathy for the South African Boers during the Boer War. Various articles cautioned against superficial judgments in their case.[35] This connection with the old world, however, had its limitations. In 1876 the Christian Reformed Church was offered a subsidy by the Dutch churches, but declined it.[36] At a later date, an article advised against calling ministers from the Netherlands, stating that the American church was able to train its own.[37] In another series of articles the practice of transplanting disputes from the Dutch churches to this country was sharply criticized.[38]

This use of a foreign language on American soil persisted for a remarkably long period of time. The admission of the English speaking congregations of the True Protestant Reformed Dutch Church in 1890 forced some concessions. In 1892 it was decided that all propositions at Synod should be translated into English for the sake of the delegates from Classis Hackensack.[39] In 1897 it was noted that of seven theological candidates, several could preach in English. This was viewed as a cause for rejoicing.[40] And, while in 1912 some elder delegates to Synod found difficulty in expressing themselves in the Dutch language, they were still at that time in the minority.[41]

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31. Supra, Chapter II, p. 40 et passim.
32. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 5 (May 27, 1875), pp. 1 f.
33. De Wachter, Vol. XXV, no. 15 (June 8, 1892), p. 1.
34. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. III (1899), pp. 56 f.
35. Ibid., pp. 526 f., 564 ff., 574 ff.
36. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 7 (June 24, 1875), p. 1.
37. De Wachter, Vol. XXXII, no. 22 (July 19, 1899), p. 3.
38. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. IX (1905), pp. 170 ff., 272 ff., 336 ff.
39. Acts of Synod, 1892, Art. 9.
40. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (1897), p. 200.
In 1898, however, nine out of ten congregations still found the use of the Dutch language indispensable.
De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. II (1898), p. 308.
41. Acts of Synod, 1912, p. 41.

With the passage of the years, the Dutch spoken in the United States suffered some inevitable corruption. Some attempts were made to stem this tide. A series of articles deplored the corruption creeping into spoken and written Dutch. The mixed language spoken by the majority of the people was subjected to ridicule.[42] It was later remarked that the Dutch language showed some vitality in the United States. *De Wachter, De Hope,* and *De Grondwet* were singled out for praise for the purity of their Dutch. But, far from growing, the Dutch language was losing its purity in common speech through the introduction of English words.[43]

But at the same time, the leaders began to recognize the ecclesiastical dangers involved in a too-rigid adherence to a foreign language. The damage suffered by other denominations in the language transition was reviewed.[44] The need of English preaching, especially in the cities, was recognized. Grave dangers for the third and fourth generations were cited if the need were not supplied.[45] It was noted that some congregations had not guided, but opposed Americanization, with bitter consequences among the young people. Catechetical instruction in English as well as Dutch was urged. It was pointed out that the characteristic Dutch calm could sometimes pass over into procrastination and inactivity, with serious results.[46] It was urged that catechetical instruction in English be adopted as soon as practicable. For real orientation, the people must learn the terms of Reformed doctrine in the English language.[47]

In this respect, the Christian Reformed Church was bowing to the inevitable. Dr. Niebuhr says:

> Progressive, that is, more Americanized, leaders have argued for two centuries in immigrant church after immigrant church that the abandonment of the foreign language is essential for the self-preservation of the denomination concerned . . . The choice between accommodation and extinction finally becomes a forced choice. Though churches may delay the moment of their surrender few elect to perish with their mother tongue.[48]

The Synods began to struggle with this problem. The Synod of 1884 recognized an increasing preference for English among the young

42. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. IV (1900), pp. 269 ff., 503 ff.
43. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. IX (1905), pp. 409 ff.
44. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. VI (1902), pp. 253 ff., 321.
45. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (1897), p. 195.
46. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. II (1898), pp. 206 ff., 256 ff.
47. Ibid., pp. 287 ff.
48. H. Richard Niebuhr, **The Social Sources of Denominationalism** (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929), p. 212.

people, but did not feel competent to take action. The attention of the mission committee was called to this matter.[49] The True Protestant Reformed Dutch Church, with which union negotiations were in progress, was asked to conduct English preaching missions in Grand Rapids. This request, however, was denied.[50] The Synod of 1886 resolved to make a serious effort to provide for preaching and catechetical instruction in the English language wherever it was needed.[51]

The organization of separate English-speaking congregations was viewed with alarm.[52] It was felt that in such a development the process of Americanization was getting out of control. Fear of a division of the denomination along the lines of the language difference was expressed. The first such congregation was the Lagrave Ave. group in Grand Rapids, organized in 1887. This congregation called the Rev. J. Y. De Baun from the True Protestant Reformed Dutch Church. Accepting the call, he became the first pastor to serve the Christian Reformed Church in the English language.[53] Broadway Ave., Grand Rapids, followed as the second English-speaking congregation in 1893, and by 1915 there were a total of seventeen such congregations. The Synod of 1912 debated the advisability of organizing these congregations into a separate classis, but the geographical distribution and objections of principle were argued successfully against this step.[54]

This gradual progress toward the use of the English language was vastly hastened by the First World War. This period may well be regarded as the turning point in the Americanization of the Christian Reformed Church. The impact of wartime psychology was felt most concretely by the churches in Iowa. The governor of that State issued a proclamation advising the use of the English language exclusively in all public meetings. He conceded that preaching in a foreign language was permissible if the same message were brought to the same audience in English. He added the warning that in case of disregard of this advice, no protection would be forthcoming from the government. This proclamation led inadvertently to several acts of mob violence

49. Acts of Synod, 1884, Art. 49.
50. Ibid., p. 30.
51. Acts of Synod, 1886, Art. 49, 62.
52. In the interests of orthodoxy, the ideal was rather that the existing congregations work gradually in the direction of Americanization.
Cf. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. II (1898), p. 181.
53. Acts of Synod, 1888, Art. 6.
54. Acts of Synod, 1912, pp. 40-42.

against Christian Reformed Churches.[55] This action forced the use of English in a large number of the more conservative churches of the denomination. The same type of war psychology affected the other churches, although to a lesser degree. The practical cessation of immigration during and after the war made the changes more permanent than they might otherwise have been.

Other indications of the decline of the Dutch language are seen in the publications of the church and the language used at Synod. In 1914 the Christian Reformed Church acquired an English weekly. The True Protestant Reformed Dutch Church had published *The Banner of Truth* as their denominational weekly since 1865. Its purchase was advised in 1910,[56] and the Synod of 1914 complied, changing the name of the paper to *The Banner*.[57] It was not until 1926, however, that subscriptions to *The Banner* outnumbered those to *De Wachter*.[58] The bilingual character of Synod since 1912 has been noted.[59] The last reports in Dutch to be included in the *Acts of Synod* appeared in 1932,[60] although the *Agenda* for 1934 still contained reports and overtures in that language.[61]

This adherence to the Dutch language was itself a manifestation of an orthodox spirit. The Dutch immigrants shared the conservatism of other immigrants to a high degree, and their church shared the function which other immigrants gave to their respective churches.[62] In this respect the Dutch fell into the regular immigrant pattern in the United States.

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55. Incendiaries set fire to the Christian school at Sully, Iowa, and both school and church at Peoria, Iowa, were burned down.
Cf. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 135.

56. Acts of Synod, 1910, p. 15.

57. Acts of Synod, 1914, p. 23.

58. "Banner," 9,300; "Wachter," 8,100. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1926, p. 22.

59. Supra, p. 97.

60. Acts of Synod, 1932, Supplements VIII and IX, pp. 262-272.

61. Agenda for Synod, 1934, part II, pp. 220 and X.

62. "As a result of this social process the immigrants tended to become a distinct social class with a highly developed self-consciousness. They attended now to the values which the new environment threatened—to their language and their traditions. These were both the uniting bonds of the group and the symbols of its social solidarity. It was necessary, too, for the immigrants under these circumstances to find a center around which they could organize their values, a leadership which would hold together the scattered individuals of the race, a form of organization which would enable them to maintain and foster their solidarity. The only center which was available to them, as a rule, was religion; the only leaders, with few exceptions, who had braved the difficulties of a new orientation along with the migrating artisans and farmers were the clergy; the only organization which was readily at hand for maintaining the unity of the group was the church."
Niebuhr, op. cit., pp. 222 f.

But due to the historical circumstances, this conservatism proved also to be a distinct contribution to future orthodoxy. In American Church History, the period from the end of the Civil War to the close of the nineteenth century is recognized as one of important changes. Among the influences brought to bear on the American churches were the absorption of many immigrants of diverse faiths, the ideas of Horace Bushnell, the impact of Darwin's views, and the claims of higher criticism.[63] Developments in the Netherlands, as in the rest of Europe, were at least abreast, if not in advance, of those in the United States.[64]

The peculiar position of the Christian Reformed Church isolated it to a large degree from these influences. The isolation was by language from the American environment and by geographical considerations from a real influence from the Netherlands. It is true that the problem of higher criticism became the subject of an important synodical decision. But by the time the Christian Reformed Church was called upon to face this problem much of the subtlety of the danger was dissipated. The lines were by that time clearly drawn between the conservative and the liberal positions on this score. In the Janssen case, it needed only to be clearly established that the accused held critical views, and his condemnation followed as a matter of course.

Of equal importance is the fact that the views thus officially condemned had little opportunity to infiltrate unobserved into the minds of the Christian Reformed people. By the time they had become subjected to influences beyond those of their own church, the leaders were able to point out to them the implications of the new views and to make plain what the position of the Christian Reformed Church must be in the light of its standards and history. The strong denominational consciousness engendered by the language difference aided in the acceptance of that position by the people.

To summarize this idea; because of a language isolation, liberalizing forces struck the Christian Reformed Church late, with a somewhat spent force. Among the historical circumstances—as distinguished from

63. Cf. Sweet, op. cit., Chapter XX, "The Churches in the Period of Reconstruction," especially pp. 488-494.

64. Cf. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 112.
Also: "The Netherlands are farther advanced theologically than we. Certain writings which can be appreciated there are dangerous here."
De Wachter, Vol. XXX, no. 17 (June 16, 1897), p. 3.

deliberate efforts—which tended to keep the church orthodox, it is doubtful whether any ranks higher in significance than this.

An isolationist spirit can also be traced in the relations of the Christian Reformed Church with the American church world. The general attitude of the church to the American ecclesiastical environment may be characterized as one of criticism, tinged with suspicion. As one writer put it:

> My greatest objection to America has always been the fear that our generation would be estranged from the Reformed principles and pass over into a shallow Methodism. The great and mighty stream in this land is certainly more Methodistic than Reformed. I shall not easily forget what an elder in the congregation said to me when I had been here but a short time. "The Reformed faith is a plant which will not thrive here." As far as my experience goes, that statement has thus far been established.[65]

The nature of the misgivings which this author shared with others is plain from their utterances. They suspected a certain activism among American churches which contrasted unfavorably with the theological emphasis to which they were accustomed. One writer makes indirect reference to this in the midst of a searching self-criticism:

> There is more intellectual emphasis on misery than on gratitude among the Dutch. We can learn from our American neighbors to be less one-sided. But we must not lose our profundity. The Reformed Church of Holland is relatively weak in the practical application of doctrine to life.[66]

Another writer compares the Dutch and Americans in terms of their agricultural methods:

> The Dutch are a calm people. They try to get the most out of their religion as out of their land. They have a strong conservatism, typified by the well-defined boundaries of the Netherlands as contrasted with the frontiers of America. The Americans lead a faster life; they are rather broad than deep and very practical; cold theorizing has little place in their religion.[67]

Still another writer summed up the whole matter by stating that superficiality was the greatest threat to the Reformed immigrants.[68]

More specifically, the immigrants feared revivalism, which they had come to look upon as a distinctive characteristic of American religion. One article compared the revivalists to Pharisees, taking an overweening pride in their own ability to effect conversions. Faulty conversions were exposed and criticized. That revivalistic ideas had made some contact with the Dutch people is seen from the fact that the occasion for this

65. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (1897), pp. 146 f.
66. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. II (1898), pp. 211 ff.
67. Ibid., p. 181.
68. Ibid., p. 2.

article was a revival in Holland, Michigan.[69] Dread of the loss of characteristic Reformed doctrines is seen in an article dealing with universal atonement and the proclamation of the gospel.[70] Other fears expressed concern the loss of true spirituality,[71] the implications of evolutionary teaching, [72] and the loss of such Reformed practices as closed communion and ecclesiastical discipline.[73]

These dangers were not imaginary. Dr. Niebuhr makes specific mention of some of them. Regarding the activism which we have mentioned, he states:

> Hence immigrant churches, though trained in many instances to regard the essence of Christianity as doctrine and the field of the Christian life as contemplation and devotion, have often assumed, under the influence of environment and tradition, that pragmatic attitude toward their faith which characterizes American Christianity. Some churches, because of their heritage, have been more, some less, receptive to this influence of New World activism; but even those which have been most inclined to find salvation in faith alone have needed to make large concessions in their preaching and practice to the doctrine of salvation by or in activity.[74]

Concerning the influence of revivalism, he says:

> The extent to which immigrant churches have adopted a revivalism which was foreign to their original character has been noted in the case of the New England Puritans and Southwestern Presbyterians. The Lutherans of the South and Southwest also departed somewhat from their traditional antagonism to all emotionalism, and accepted a modicum of prevalent practices in evangelization. Even Catholicism has been unable to resist the tendency to conform its methods of conversion in some degree to the technique of conversion developed by its Protestant rivals.[75]

In general, the Christian Reformed writers seemed to look on their church as something apart from the American church. It was only by a conscious effort, not often made, that they could bring themselves to think of their church as part of the American scene. Niebuhr makes specific mention of the Christian Reformed Church when depicting that tendency of the immigrant church:

> The members of a European church coming to the New World after their church has been established on American soil for some time frequently find themselves ill at ease among their partly Americanized kindred and feel compelled to organize new denominations which will be truer to the Old World customs . . . Thus at about the time when the Dutch Reformed Church became the Reformed Church in America, the True Dutch Reformed Church was organized by the newer immigration

69. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. V (1901), pp. 111 ff.
70. De Wachter, Vol. X, no. 11 (August 16, 1877), p. 3.
71. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (1897), p. 30.
72. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. III (1899), p. 108.
73. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XI (1908), pp. 421 ff.
74. Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 204.
75. Ibid., pp. 204 f.

> from the Netherlands. These churches were in agreement in their acceptance of the old Dutch creeds; the explicit issue between them was the use of hymns or psalms in worship . . . The implicit issues included the whole subject of adaptation or resistance to native culture. The process of Americanization, however, did not leave the True Dutch Reformed Church untouched. In the course of time all reference to the European background of the church has been dropped from its title; it became the Christian Reformed Church. By such changes of name a great many internal changes are implied.[76]

The ecclesiastical isolation of the Christian Reformed Church can be seen more clearly by a consideration of its relationships to specific ecclesiastical bodies and organizations. We consider first its relationships to other denominations, beginning with the Reformed Church in America. Doctrinally and historically, this church was closer to the Christian Reformed Church than any other large ecclesiastical body in America. Yet the relationships between them for many years could be characterized as no better than fair.

The prolonged and bitter controversy between these two denominations has been given a rather full treatment in Chapter II. We shall not repeat that discussion or attempt to carry it further at present, but shall concentrate on the breakdown of union discussions and the transfer of some Reformed congregations to the Christian Reformed Church.

The union discussions which we consider did not concern union with the whole body of the Reformed Church in America. There was no desire for such a union among the Christian Reformed people after the ill-fated union of 1850 which was terminated in the Secession of 1857. The divisive issues were not permitted to die. In 1898 and 1899 a typical series of articles appeared. It was recognized that the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America were alike in their doctrinal standards except for the negative part of the Canons of Dort.[77] But the Christian Reformed Church criticized the Reformed Church in America for admitting lodge members and compromising on worldly issues.[78] Criticism also concerned prayer meetings, revivals, and hymns.[79] When the possibility of renewed union with that church was discussed, an unfavorable attitude was assumed because of alleged doctrinal defections in the larger and older body. It was even unkindly

76. Ibid., pp. 213 f.
77. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. II (1898), p. 496.
78. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. III (1899), pp. 7 ff.
79. Ibid., pp. 17 ff., 24 ff.

suggested that the desire for union was due to the rapid growth of the Christian Reformed, or "Afgescheiden" (Seceded) group.[80]

The kind of union which aroused some favorable comment was that of all the immigrant Hollanders into a new general synod,[81] or as another article called it, a new and pure Reformed Church.[82] This idea was viewed with some degree of pessimism at first,[83] and yet it showed some real vitality. In 1888, the Christian Reformed Synod made a declaration concerning the desirability of fellowship with the immigrant members of the Reformed Church.[84]

These discussions reached a climax in 1894. As a result of an informal and fraternal meeting of ministers, a joint meeting of the two groups was called to discuss a possible union. Each side drew up and published its own program for this meeting. As reported in *De Wachter,* the Reformed brethren desired the free exchange of membership certificates and recognition of each other in admission to the Communion table and the pulpit. The Christian Reformed planners leaned rather toward organic union of the two groups. They indicated that admission to the Communion table could hardly be granted as long as the other group tolerated lodge members.[85]

The meeting to discuss this plan was scheduled for the Van Raalte Church in Holland, Michigan, November 15, 1894. Shortly before that date it was postponed to November 22. In the intervening week it was announced in the papers that the committee representing the Reformed Church had withdrawn its support of the meeting. Both this withdrawal and the fact that no official notice had been sent to the Christian Reformed committee aroused bitterness.[86] With such an inauspicious start, the meeting resulted in renewed difficulties, rather than in the settlement of any disputes.[87] No such formal union or close co-operation was ever discussed by these two groups since that time. Three years later the opinion was expressed that the Reformed and

80. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, nos. 18, 19 (Nov. 24, Dec. 9, 1875).
81. De Wachter, Vol. XVII, no. 13 (June 5, 1884), p. 2.
82. De Wachter, Vol. XXV, no. 36 (Nov. 9, 1892), p. 1.
83. De Wachter, Vol. XIX, no. 8 (April 28, 1886), p. 2.
84. De Wachter, Vol. XXI, no. 19 (July 18, 1888), p. 2.
85. De Wachter, Vol. XXVII, no. 34 (October 27, 1894), p. 1.
86. Ibid., no. 40 (November 28, 1894), p. 1. Although no reasons were given for this withdrawal of support, the insistence of the Christian Reformed group on discipline for lodge members undoubtedly had something to do with it.
87. Ibid., no. 41, 42.

Christian Reformed Churches could best continue to exist side by side. Their differences, when examined, prove to be too great for union.[88]

It was during this period that the lodge question was providing the main subject of dispute between the two denominations. Between 1882 and 1884 several Reformed congregations joined the Christian Reformed Church because of their convictions on the lodge question. The Christian Reformed Synod adopted rules to govern such accessions. Specific regulations were made for the admission of a congregation without a minister,[89] a congregation with their minister,[90] and two or more congregations at one time.[91] This willingness to receive such congregations undoubtedly did little to improve the cordiality of relations between the two denominations. It was even charged that such transfers were encouraged and sought by the Christian Reformed Church.[92]

The spirit of hostility and rivalry has almost completely disappeared. The Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches have co-operated frequently with each other in a variety of projects.[93] Fraternal greetings have often been exchanged between the major assemblies of the two groups. The Reformed Church was included in the list of churches with which a technical "correspondence"[94] might be held. But the possibility of union has been forgotten and even the memory of its discussion seems to become fainter with each passing year. An unbiased observer might consider this the golden opportunity of the Christian Reformed Church for ecclesiastical fellowship. But the facts of history demonstrate that the possibility of union was never very close to realization.

Union discussions with the United Presbyterian Church achieved a far greater official prominence before they finally broke down. Relationships with this denomination were very cordial. In 1897, United Presbyterian missions received support from Christian Reformed

88. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (1897), p. 237.

89. Acts of Synod, 1883, Art. 59 a.

90. Ibid., Art. 59 b.

91. Acts of Synod, 1883, art. 11, pp. 6 f.

92. De Wachter, Vol. X, no. 12 (August 30, 1877), p. 1.

93. E.g., translation of the minutes of Classis Holland, publication of The Missionary Monthly, joint membership on Christian school boards and on the board of the National Christian Association, and in observance of the Van Raalte centennial, 1847-1947.

94. Acts of Synod, 1898, p. 53. For a description of "correspondence," see the discussion of relations with the United Presbyterians, infra.

churches.[95] In 1898, Prof. H. Beuker, a leader in the union discussions, was granted a D.D. degree by the United Presbyterian Church.[96]

Overtures toward actual union were made to the Synod of 1888 by the United Presbyterian Church.[97] For a time the prospects of union appeared bright. In the years 1894-1896 the discussion reached its peak. Each denomination reported a favorable impression of the other.[98] In 1895 a parallel was drawn between the two denominations, showing their similarity in history, doctrine, and practice.[99] The two churches were introduced to each other's standards, and each approved the standards of the other.[100] A committee report favoring co-operative union was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church.[101]

It began to appear, however, that actual union was not likely to be accomplished. In discussing a possible union, there was an understandable hesitation on both sides, lest something vital be lost through this step.[102] It was pointed out to Christian Reformed readers that no parallel was to be drawn with the union of the "Churches of the Secession" and the "Churches of the Doleantie" in the Netherlands in 1892. Those churches had identical confessions; the confessions of the two American churches under discussion were similar, but not identical.[103] The difference in language was seen as a barrier.[104] It was stated that while immigration continued, this barrier would continue to exist.[105] One cannot escape the impression from the reading of these union discussions that the desire for union came mainly from the United Presbyterian Church and the objections to it from the other side. For example, the United Presbyterian committee forwarded a report to their General Assembly favoring correspondence with an eye to future union. The Christian Reformed committee preferred to leave the future union out of the picture.[106]

The Synod of 1894 received a report opposing union with the United Presbyterian Church because of language differences, but

95. De Wachter, Vol. XXVII, no. 4 (March 21, 1894), p. 1.
96. De Wachter, Vol. XXX, no. 19 (June 30, 1897), p. 1.
97. Acts of Synod, 1888, Art. 19.
98. De Wachter, Vol. XXVII, nos. 13, 45-56 (1894-1895).
99. De Wachter, Vol. XXVIII, no. 4 (March 20, 1895), p. 2.
100. De Wachter, Vol. XXVIII, no. 28 (Sept. 4, 1895), p. 2.
101. Ibid.
102. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. 1 (1897), pp. 21 f.
103. Ibid., pp. 23 f.
104. Ibid., p. 24.
105. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. II (1898), pp. 35 ff.
106. Ibid., pp. 71 ff.

providing a detailed program of co-operation.[107] This program included exchange of pulpits, approval of the confessions and discipline of the sister church, and the exchange of delegates with advisory vote. The Synod of 1896 decided to refer this matter to the classes for approval.[108] Only two of the classes reported in favor of it.[109] Some suspicion regarding the attitude of the United Presbyterian Church toward lodge members and toward non-Reformed denominations is reflected in the questions asked of the delegates of that church to the Synod of 1896.[110]

With a view particularly to the reluctance of the classes to approve a special arrangement with the United Presbyterian Church, the Synod of 1898 called a definite halt to union discussions.[111] As a substitute, this Synod outlined a system of correspondence to be adopted with officially recognized sister churches. The Synod welcomed the revival of the ideal of co-operation which was cherished by the Reformed Churches during the sixteenth century. It then outlined the system of correspondence, which was to consist in the following four points:

> a) In sending of delegates to each other's major assemblies with advisory vote;
>
> b) in fraternal admonitions to each other, lest any Church depart from Reformed principles in doctrine, worship, or polity;
>
> c) in discussion with each other how to act toward third parties;
>
> d) in serving each other with advice, particularly in the discussion of changes in Confession, Church Order, and Liturgy.[112]

The churches with which such correspondence was to be established were De Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands, the Old Reformed Church of Germany, the Reformed Churches of South Africa, the United Presbyterian Church in America, and the Reformed Church in America, particularly its Dutch section.[113] To this list the Synod of 1900 added the following: the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the Associate Presbyterian Church.[114] This ideal of correspondence was never fully realized with any of the churches mentioned, although it was reflected to some extent in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1946.

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107. Acts of Synod, 1894, Art. 127.
108. Acts of Synod, 1896, Art. 60, p. 35.
109. Acts of Synod, 1898, p. 54.
110. Acts of Synod, 1896, pp. 29-31.
111. Acts of Synod, 1898, p. 78.
112. Ibid., p. 52.
113. Ibid., p. 53.
114. Acts of Synod, 1900, p. 52.

In these negotiations one can detect some desire for the realization of the unity of the Church of Christ. But with greater clarity can be seen the results of the ill-fated union with the Reformed Church in America, 1850-1857. The experience of the Christian Reformed Church in that case made its members extremely cautious with respect to any union. Recognizing the reprehensible aspects of this hyper-cautious attitude, we must grant also that the solitary course chosen by the Christian Reformed Church was the safest with respect to the preservation of orthodoxy in doctrine and practice.

The lone exception to this consistent refusal to unite with other denominations was of minor proportions. Its net results were not of such a nature as to lend much support to future union negotiations. The union was with the True Protestant Reformed Dutch Church. It speeded the Americanization of the Christian Reformed Church and opened the door to the eventual introduction of hymns. But it also caused internal dissensions, and the numerical accessions which it brought were very small.

The True Protestant Reformed Dutch Church had its origin in a secession from the Reformed Church in America in 1822. The cause of the secession was the existence of "Hopkinsian" and Arminian views in the Reformed Church.[115] The seceded group organized into a General Synod with two classes, Hackensack and Union. The small denomination thus formed did not fare well. Classis Union separated from Classis Hackensack.[116] It was with Classis Hackensack that the Christian Reformed Church had its contact.

The immigrants who came into contact with this denomination felt a certain affinity for it.[117] By 1871 relations had reached the stage of the exchange of fraternal delegates and the admission to Communion table and pulpit.[118] By 1878, Classis Hackensack was seeking closer relations with the Christian Reformed Church.[119] Some response to this desire is reflected in the *Acts of Synod,* 1881.[120] Little progress was made toward actual union until matters were inadvertently brought to a head in 1888. The Synod of that year adopted rules of order which

115. De Wachter, Vol. XVI, no. 14 (June 14, 1883), p. 1.
116. Cf. Kromminga, op. cit., pp. 118 f.
117. E.g. Gysbert Haan. The sympathy is natural in view of mutual criticisms of the Reformed Church in America.
118. Cf. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 119.
119. De Wachter, Vol. X, no. 5 (May 24, 1877), p. 4.
120. Acts of Synod, 1881, Art. 37, 38.

regulated the rights of members of Synod not delegated by Christian Reformed congregations.[121] When it was pointed out that these rules denied the vote to delegates from the True Protestant Reformed Dutch Church, Synod instructed its Classis Hudson to work out a union with that body, if possible.[122]

Classis Hudson reported in 1890 that it had not quite succeeded in its task:

> They (Classis Hackensack of the True Protestant Reformed Dutch Church) had met with Classis Hudson concerning union, and because of one point the union was not accomplished. The two sides were agreed in confession and church order, but they use, besides the Psalms, 52 hymns in agreement with the 52 Lord's Days of the Catechism. They do not wish to force those hymns upon us, just as little as they desire to have ours for their own.[123]

A committee appointed to consider this problem reported that they were in favor of union, since the question of the hymns was one of form rather than essence, and these particular hymns had much to be said in their favor.[124] Synod thereupon decided as follows:

> Synod approves the action of the committee *in re* union with the True Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, with this understanding; that the use of the 52 hymns based on the Heidelberg Catechism shall be permitted, but in the Dutch or German speaking congregations no hymns shall be introduced. It is further decided to give written notice of this decision to Classis Hackensack, and to exhort them at the same time to support our causes.[125]

Although union was thus accomplished, unity of spirit was not complete. The Synod of 1898 found occasion to investigate the attitude of Classis Hackensack to secret societies, and found it lacking in fervor and consistency.[126] The classis was admonished to be very careful in this matter. In 1906, however, the classis admitted a candidate to the ministry who declared that he had no objections whatsoever to masonry.[127] It was left to Classes Hudson and Hackensack to deal with this matter.[128]

The upshot of this affair was that the Synod of 1908 received, with little advance warning, this information:

> That seven congregations of the Classis (Hackensack) decided on May 20, 1908, to sever connections with our Church;
>
> That at a special meeting of Classis, held June 2, 1908, the following decision was taken;

121. Acts of Synod, 1888, Art. 86, page 6.
122. Acts of Synod, 1890, Art. 24, p. 9.
123. Acts of Synod, 1890, Art. 24, p. 9.
124. Ibid., Appendix VIII, pp. 45 f.
125. Ibid., Art. 49, p. 14.
126. Acts of Synod, 1898, Art. 84, pp. 64-66.
127. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 119.
128. Acts of Synod, 1906, p. 25.

"Whereas it appears from the votes of the majority of the congregations of this Classis that they are dissatisfied with the relationship between this Classis and the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, and that this ecclesiastical relationship should be discontinued,

Therefore, resolved, in obedience to the voice of those congregations of this Classis to discontinue the existing relationship with the above named Synod and to assume or retain the name under which we are incorporated, namely; True Reformed Dutch Church, and to continue our ecclesiastical work under that name. Further resolved to urge this name upon the various consistories and congregations of this Classis and advise them to continue their work under it."[129]

Three congregations refused to join this movement, and were thenceforth recognized as Classis Hackensack of the Christian Reformed Church.[130] They represent the net numerical gain of the Christian Reformed Church in this union episode.

The results of the union for the Christian Reformed Church were not wholly unsatisfactory. That body was aided greatly in making the language transition from Dutch to English by their brethren in Classis Hackensack, making use of their English sermons, weekly newspaper, liturgical and catechetical literature, and hymns. Union sentiment could not have been much advanced by their experience in this matter, however. It may be suggested that there is poetic justice in this experience. In this affair, the Christian Reformed Church was confronted with an independent spirit like that of which it had been accused in its relations with the Reformed Church in America. Union discussions were more successful in this case than in any other. But at best, they were far from perfect in their success.

The same isolationist spirit can be seen in the relationships of the Christian Reformed Church with federations and alliances of churches. The implications of the desire to remain orthodox came to clear expression in the discussion of such alliances.

We mention first the relations of the Christian Reformed Church with the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. In 1903 a writer commented upon the various tendencies in the direction of union. He wrote in part as follows:

In fact, there is a universal desire for federation. Except, alas, so it seems, among our brethren in the Netherlands, where, as it seems to us, we sometimes hear something of the expression, "To your tents, o Israel!"[131]

129. Acts of Synod, 1908, pp. 45 f.
130. Ibid., p. 46.
131. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. VII (1903), p. 98.

He further remarked that a desire to work together was a cause for rejoicing, but cautioned against a union of incompatible parties. This writer later became one of the representatives of the Christian Reformed Church on the Federal Council, during the brief association of the church with that body.[132]

More comments upon the proposed Federal Council appeared in 1905. A writer expressed himself as follows in an article in that year:

> What an imposing array of names! We might well sing Psalm 133:1, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The question arises among us, however, will not an organization like this lead to the obliteration of ecclesiastical boundaries, which may not be wiped out except through the acceptance of a confession which is entirely in accord with God's Word? . . . Were this development which we see all about us truly progressive, we would rejoice greatly. But we cannot escape the impression that it all leads to a unity without a positive Biblical confession, a Christendom above all denominational divisions, in which Satan can co-operate.[133]

This somewhat equivocal attitude is reflected in the official relations of the church with the Federal Council. The first mention of the Federal Council in the *Acts of Synod* occurs in 1914, when it was decided to contact the Council on the possibility of securing better marriage laws. "This to take place by means of joining this Council after sufficient investigation, if that appears desirable, or by means of correspondence with this Council."[134] This cautious approach did not lead to membership in the Federal Council. It was reported in 1916:

> From the report of the committee appointed in 1914 it has appeared that co-operation with this council is unfruitful, if not impossible. Your committee judges that improvement of marriage laws can and ought to be secured by other means.[135]

In 1918, however, the desire to place camp pastors through the agency of the Federal Council led to membership in that body. The decision of Synod is as follows:

> Resolved that we assume membership in the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America in order to facilitate this matter:
> 1) That we may gain an official standing among the Churches;
> 2) Because the Red Cross works only through that body;
> 3) Because if we did not do this, one of the three ways to participate in the "Overseas Service" would be eliminated.[136]

In 1920 two overtures were received touching this relationship. One asked other grounds for membership, and the other requested

132. Dr. H. Beets. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1922, p. 87.
133. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. IX (1905), p. 472.
134. Acts of Synod, 1914, p. 14.
135. Acts of Synod, 1916, p. 36.
136. Acts of Synod, 1918, p. 43.

termination of the membership.[137] The committee recognized that the grounds originally adduced for membership no longer applied, since the war was over. It contended, however, that this did not necessarily imply that membership must be terminated. It listed the following considerations for and against membership in the Federal Council:

> In favor of the association it must be said;
> 1) We obtain thereby an official standing among the Churches of our country;
> 2) We stand in closer contact with other church groups of our country through this agency, and can consult them in matters of Missions, Evangelization, and Social questions;
> 3) We will become better known in the ecclesiastical world, and thus be of more significance and have greater influence.
> But your committee envisages these dangers also:
> 1) That in course of time the Federal Council of Churches might appropriate a sort of hierarchical power to itself;
> 2) That the Liberals in the various groups may soon be the keynoters;
> 3) That the influence of the Federal Council of Churches might become purely humanistic in the future;
> 4) That our association with the Federal Council of Churches might lead to a weakening of the lines of demarcation.[138]

Another committee was therefore appointed to make a careful study of the Federal Council and report to the next Synod.[139]

The report of that committee in 1922 was highly favorable to the Federal Council. They answered in turn each of the four objections listed above. They pointed out that in case any of the fears materialized, the way was always open for withdrawal. They therefore advised that Synod should not terminate the membership, but should rather appoint able men to represent the Christian Reformed Church in Council affairs.[140] The Synod acted favorably upon this advice.[141]

The delegates to the Federal Council presented a favorable report on its activities to the following Synod. They said in part:

> In view of what has appeared in several papers as to the religious views of the men heading the Council, we feel compelled to say that it is unfair to hold the Council responsible for all the utterances connected with various commissions and their spokesmen.[143]

They also cited favorable comments upon the Federal Council from other orthodox churches.

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137. Overtures of Classis Orange City and Classis Pacific. Acts of Synod, 1920, p. 28.
138. Acts of Synod, 1920, pp. 28 f.
139. Ibid., pp. 29 and 94.
140. Acts of Synod, 1922, pp. 232-236.
141. Ibid., pp. 78, 87.
142. Acts of Synod, 1924, pp. 322-328.
143. Ibid., p. 325.

A different spirit was manifest, however, in five overtures received by that Synod.[144] They all requested withdrawal from the Federal Council, and agreed in citing the liberal tendencies of that Council as grounds. We quote the overture of Classis Holland as representative:

> Whereas the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America is an organization decidedly liberal in its principles and tendencies, advocating a humanistic religion, aiming at the "united church of the future," placing the church on one level with all kinds of social welfare organizations and international friendship alliances; and
>
> Whereas an active propaganda is carried on by the Federal Council to disseminate these modern-ethical principles, and to bring about a realization of its humanistic aim; and
>
> Whereas the Federal Council, by its Commissions, constantly undertakes to act as spokesman for the churches it represents, on many occasions, mostly of a social and political nature, and assumes an authority going far beyond its constitution; and
>
> Whereas the Christian Reformed Church, by virtue of its membership, becomes jointly responsible for this propaganda and these deliverances,
>
> Classis overtures Synod to sever all connections between our Church and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.[145]

A further comment of Classis Grand Rapids West may be illuminating. "Membership in this Council is not restricted to orthodox Protestant churches. We are convinced that ecclesiastical alliances of any kind between orthodox and liberals are contrary to the Word of God."[146]

The synodical committee assigned to this matter advised retention of membership, arguing that the leadership was not liberal at the time, that continued membership would strengthen the "good element," and that membership might again prove very useful.[147] Acting contrary to the advice of this committee, the Synod voted to sever the connections of the Christian Reformed Church with the Federal Council.[148] The association was never renewed.

In evaluating this stand with respect to the Federal Council, it must be borne in mind that the Synod of 1922 was called upon to judge the Janssen case, involving the influence of liberalism on the Christian Reformed Church. The repercussions of this case were still felt quite strongly at the Synod of 1924. It was to be expected that in such an

144. Overtures of Classes Grand Rapids West and East, Holland, and Pacific; overture of the Consistory of Kalamazoo I.
Acts of Synod, 1924, pp. 18-20.
145. Ibid., p. 18.
146. Ibid., p. 18.
147. Ibid., p. 20.
148. Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 112.

atmosphere any tendencies to liberalism on the part of the Federal Council would weigh heavily against it in the minds of the Christian Reformed leaders. But on the other hand it must not be supposed that this criticism of the Federal Council was merely the result of a fleeting reaction to the Janssen case. Criticism of that Council and the type of interdenominational co-operation which it fosters has continued up to the present time.[149] In spite of a professed willingness to co-operate with others and the obvious benefits of Council membership, the Christian Reformed Church found its principles incompatible with such an association. The alleged liberalism within the Federal Council was the one insurmountable obstacle.

We note one more instance in which the Christian Reformed Church declined a close association with other bodies. It is interesting because of the formal statement which it elicited. In 1930 the church received an invitation to consult with five other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations regarding organic union.[150] It was reported to the Synod that representatives of these five denominations had already met and recommended organic union to the Church Courts from which they had received their appointments.

Our interest centers in the declaration which Synod adopted on this occasion. We reproduce it in full, as the most complete official statement of the church on the subject of church union and orthodoxy:

> However much we believe in the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ, a unity which, though essentially spiritual, should also as much as possible come to visible expression in the organized Church; and,
>
> However much we desire to cultivate the spirit of mutual understanding and co-operation between the Calvinistic branches of historical Christendom;
>
> We cannot co-operate in any movement whose avowed aim is to effectuate *organic* union between our Church and the five affiliated Churches mentioned above. *Reasons:*
>
> 1) The Christian Reformed Church stands foursquare for the Reformed interpretation of Christian truth as expressed in its confessional standards, and cannot consider an organic union with ecclesiastical bodies in which there is widespread indifference toward great essentials of the Reformed faith, such as we are persuaded is the case in at least one of the co-operating bodies;
>
> 2) In the struggle between Modernism and Orthodoxy which is raging in the historic Christian Churches today, the Christian Reformed Church

149. Cf. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (March 28, 1947), p. 393.

150. The Presbyterian Church U. S. A.; The Presbyterian Church U. S.; the Reformed Church in America; the Reformed Church U. S.; the United Presbyterian Church of North America.
Cf. Acts of Synod, 1930, p. 103.

stands committed to the orthodox, biblical, and supernatural view of the Christian faith, and cannot consider organic union with ecclesiastical bodies in which this position is not unequivocally affirmed and maintained. It is a matter of common knowledge that in at least one of these co-operating bodies Modernism is not only tolerated ecclesiastically, but also openly propagated in pulpit, press, and theological education;

3) The Christian Reformed Church maintains discipline over its members both in matters of doctrine and of Christian living. It believes that such discipline is demanded by the Word of God and that it is indispensable for the welfare of the Church. We deeply deplore the fact that ecclesiastical discipline, as we conceive of it and as we believe a Church of the Reformed persuasion should maintain it, has in some of the five aforementioned co-operating Churches practically fallen into disuse, on which account we feel we cannot seriously contemplate organic union with them;

4) In the matter of membership in secret, oathbound organizations the Christian Reformed Church not only holds that such membership is incompatible with membership in the Church, but also maintains and enforces this position by debarring from its membership those who are so affiliated. Organic union with the five aforementioned co-operating Churches could be effected only at the expense of maintaining this prerequisite for church-membership, a sacrifice which we are not prepared to make.

We welcome all efforts which may lead to strengthening the bonds of true unity between the Churches of Christendom, and especially between those denominations whose creedal position is historically rooted in the Calvinistic Reformation, but feel that for these reasons we cannot co-operate in any plan looking to organic union between the Christian Reformed Church and the five co-operating Churches mentioned above.[151]

This declaration requires little comment. It is a clear indication of the requirements of orthodoxy in doctrine and practice which the Christian Reformed Church consistently maintained as a *sine qua non* of organic union.[152]

There are, however, two examples of interdenominational co-operation which the Christian Reformed Church has found compatible with its requirements. The first of these is the present membership maintained by the church in the National Association of Evangelicals. The attitude toward this organization was sympathetic from the first. In 1942 Classis Muskegon had overtured Synod to take steps toward setting up some such organization as this. When therefore the Christian Reformed Church became acquainted with the National Association of Evangelicals, that body was immediately viewed as the fulfillment of

151. Acts of Synod, 1930, pp. 104 f.

152. Other manifestations of a similar attitude are:
(1) A refusal to join the "Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System" because of liberty given by that Alliance to Arminians. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1902, pp. 108 f.
(2) A refusal to join the "Presbyterian Alliance" because its standpoint was too vague. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 160.
(3) A negative decision with respect to a possible alliance of Reformed Churches. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1943, p. 142.

a real need.[153] Even before any official action had been taken by the church as a whole, the Seminary Faculty had delegated one of its members to attend the constitutional convention of the National Association of Evangelicals held in Chicago in May, 1943.[154] At the request of the Synodical Committee, others also attended this meeting.[155] Their report was generally very favorable. The only fear expressed was that the Association might proceed to attempt to do the work of the Church itself, especially in the field of Evangelism.[156]

Thus when Synod received an overture requesting the Church to join the Association,[157] its delegates were already on record as being in favor of such co-operation. The choice which faced this Synod was between membership in the National Association of Evangelicals and the American Council of Christian Churches. Of these two, the former was chosen as being the "stronger and having the greater promise of attaining the desired end."[158] Membership in the Association was assumed at that Synod.[159]

In the ensuing years, this relationship has proved quite peaceful. Some fears as to a possible evangelistic campaign on the part of the National Association of Evangelicals were expressed at the following Synod, but these were silenced.[160] Otherwise the reports have been favorable and the membership has been renewed year after year without a great deal of debate.

The Christian Reformed Church has occupied a position of some importance in the Association. Many of the members of the Association are independent churches, or congregations whose denominations belong to the Federal Council. The well-organized and unified Christian Reformed Church thus carries weight through its delegates. Undoubtedly the influence of that church has been a strong consideration in keeping the Association from engaging in an evangelistic campaign of its own.[161] The experience of the church in Christian education has also been of great assistance in the program of education which the Association is now sponsoring.[162]

153. Acts of Synod, 1943, p. 134.
154. Ibid., p. 151.
155. Ibid., p. 152.
156. Ibid., p. 153.
157. Overture of Bellflower I, California. Acts of Synod, 1943, pp. 132 f.
158. Ibid., p. 135.
159. Ibid., p. 137.
160. Acts of Synod, 1944, p. 86.
161. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1944, p. 86; 1945, p. 101.
162. Cf. United Evangelical Action, Vol. VI (Sept. 15, 1947), p. 14.

How has the Christian Reformed Church found it possible to maintain membership in such an organization as this? Undoubtedly the seven-point doctrinal statement which every member of the Association must sign has played a large part in Christian Reformed co-operation. This statement is clearly Evangelical, expressing faith in an inspired Bible, the Deity of Christ and attendant doctrines, and certain specified operations of the Holy Spirit. The importance of this statement in the minds of Christian Reformed delegates is seen from the fact that every report of those delegates from 1943 to the present has contained a full quotation of this statement.[163] Another consideration is that the Association is clearly not tending in the direction of union, but abiding by its original purpose, to lend a unified voice to orthodox Protestantism. The need of such a voice was plainly felt by the Christian Reformed Church as well as other denominations. It may be pointed out also that the Association has put to rest the fears of the Christian Reformed members as to its engaging in functions not proper to it.[164] The Christian Reformed Church is here co-operating with groups of which it is quite critical, e.g. such groups as are Arminian in doctrine and practice. But the co-operation is in fields where the differences need not be expressed, or where they have no determinative weight. Therefore co-operation is possible, and its benefits outweigh the objections to it.

The question arises whether this willingness to co-operate with a broad group of evangelicals will not tend to "streamline" the well-rounded Calvinism of the Christian Reformed Church to a typical group of Fundamentalist points. In seeking to answer this question, it must be admitted that there is much sympathy with and some tendency toward Fundamentalism among the rank and file of the church membership. When, however, such tendencies come to open expression, e.g. in letters to the church publications, vigorous opposition is almost certain to be immediately found. As to the attitude of the leaders, it is generally true that the distinctions between Calvinism and Fundamentalism are less emphasized than those between Calvinism and Modernism. But although there has been rather close contact with Fundamentalism for a number of years, there is no definite trend in its direction in the

163. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1943, p. 153; 1944, p. 326; 1945, p. 271; 1946, p. 380; 1947, p. 395.

164. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 385.

official and general position of the church. In the National Association of Evangelicals, contact with Fundamentalism is very close. But the distinction is made between the functions of this co-operative organization and the rights and duties of the organized church. The Christian Reformed Church therefore continues to pursue its own program with no alteration in its standpoint visible thus far. Of course, the very fact that the church joined this association is a clear indication that Fundamentalism is not classed with Modernism as an enemy of the truth.

There is one other example of a willingness on the part of the Christian Reformed Church to co-operate with others. This is found in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1946. Such a Synod was discussed at the Christian Reformed Synod in 1932, in response to a request from South Africa. But at that time the economic depression interrupted the preparations for a Reformed Synod.[165] The matter was again taken up at the Synod of 1939, at which time a committee was actively at work making preparations.[166] But the outbreak of World War II proved an insurmountable obstacle, and the project was again postponed.

The first Reformed Ecumenical Synod finally met in Grand Rapids, Michigan, August 14 to 30, 1946. Represented officially were De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, Die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika, and the Christian Reformed Church.[167] The Orthodox Presbyterian Church had an observer present.[168] This gathering was largely preparatory, looking toward a larger, more ecumenical gathering of Churches.[169] The next meeting is to be held, if possible, in Amsterdam, in August, 1948.[170] To this meeting other churches in Holland, South Africa, and the United States, as well as in Germany, Belgium, the East Indies, and South America are to be invited.[171]

In spite of its preparatory nature, however, this Synod did issue a highly significant statement.[172] The underlying current which runs throughout the testimony is faith in the infallibly inspired Scriptures. Quite consistently with the whole character of the Synod, the testimony

165. Acts of Synod, 1932, pp. 25, 119-122.
166. Acts of Synod, 1939, pp. 232 ff.
167. Acts of the First Reformed Ecumenical Synod, p. 10.
168. Ibid., p. 11.
169. Ibid., foreword.
170. Ibid., p. 59.
171. Ibid., p. 60.
172. Ibid., pp. 52-56.

calls for unity of the churches, but a unity which is based upon and regulated by the Word. It deplores not only the poor moral, political, and economic situation of the world in general, but also the deep division among the churches in their attitude toward the Word of God. It is explicit in favoring Christian schools. It reiterates faith in the doctrines of creation, the fall of man, and the physical return of Christ.

This testimony is so significant because it epitomizes the position of these churches in general and of the Christian Reformed Church in particular with respect to ecumenicity. The broader ecumenical movements have been largely ignored by the Christian Reformed Church. What attention has been paid to them has been strongly tinged with criticism, in the conviction that they tend to a weakening of the faith. On the basis of certain central agreements, however, the church does sincerely desire to bring the unity of the Church of Christ to visible expression. The churches which met in this Synod are agreed on one important point, *viz.,* that adherence to the Word of God as divinely inspired must be the first and most important consideration. Organic union, interdenominational co-operation, and ecumenicity, however desirable, must be subordinated to such adherence. This is, on the one hand, an indication of the type of orthodoxy manifested by the Christian Reformed Church. On the other hand, it is also an example of the attitudes past and present which have tended to the preservation of that orthodoxy.

It remains for us to consider the attitude of the Christian Reformed Church to its secular environment. The efforts of the church to influence that environment in a positive way will be treated in Chapter VI. We mention here two indications of a defensive attitude over against the impact of the environment on the church.

The first of these is a general reaction to worldliness, which culminated in a synodical declaration against worldly amusements which was issued in 1928. A rising tide of worldliness was recognized at the Synod of 1924, in connection with the Common Grace controversy.[173] In response to several overtures, a committee was appointed in 1926 to make a thorough study of the problem of worldly amusements, particularly dancing, theater attendance, and card playing.[174] That com-

173. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 148.
174. Acts of Synod, 1926, pp. 56-58.

mittee reported in 1928, and its report was adopted as the official stand of the Christian Reformed Church.[175] It was further provided that this report should be published in *The Banner* and *De Wachter,* and distributed at cost price in pamphlet form.

The report is primarily positive and general, mentioning only incidentally the three specific amusements on which the overtures had concentrated. It defines the proper attitude of the Christian toward worldly amusements in view of four considerations: the honor of God, the welfare of man, the principle of spiritual separation from the world, and Christian liberty. It urges ministers and leaders to warn consistently against evils of the world, and asks that attention be paid to the attitude of the individual to worldly amusements when making appointments to boards or when examining those who wish to make confession of faith.

Although this report was fundamentally positive, it was the small negative portion of it which aroused difficulty. The enforcement of the stand against card playing, dancing, and theater attendance was not found easy. A report on conditions at Calvin College[176] indicates not only that the decision could not be fully enforced there, but that there was widespread dissatisfaction with it among the leaders, both in the college and in the various congregations. The application of the negative portion of this testimony varies with the disposition of the local consistory. The positive portion is more faithfully supported, although likewise with varying degrees of diligence.

This testimony reflects an increasing influence of the environment on the Christian Reformed Church. The stand taken is consistent with the basic attitudes of the church, but is, in its negative portion, in danger of becoming a dead letter. The question therefore arises whether the results of the breaking down of the language isolation are not going to bring the Christian Reformed Church into serious difficulties in the future. Its orthodoxy has passed certain tests, but new ones are certainly awaiting it.

The second reaction to worldliness is seen in the handling of the divorce problem. The Christian Reformed Church shares the struggle against the divorce evil with all other Christian churches. But we here

175. Acts of Synod, 1928, pp. 86-89.
176. Acts of Synod, 1940, pp. 186-200.

treat its particular actions against this evil as illustrating the growing impact of the environment upon it.

The particular problem which has faced the Christian Reformed Church is divorce on un-Scriptural grounds (i.e. on grounds other than adultery) and the admission to membership or retention of membership of people who have been thus divorced and then have remarried. The Synods of 1890 and 1908 took a strong and uncompromising stand on this question. They stated that a man who, because he committed adultery, is divorced legitimately by his wife, may not remain a member of the church if he remarries while his first wife is living. By his act of adultery he freed his wife, but not himself.[177] The same matter continued to trouble the church in subsequent Synods.[178]

The Synod of 1944 was called upon to adjudicate a complicated divorce case. It concerned a man and woman who had both previously been divorced by their mates on un-Biblical grounds. Afterward they confessed having had illicit relations with each other before their respective divorces. After their marriage to each other, their former mates married other parties. Some time later, the couple applied for membership in a Christian Reformed Church. The consistory granted this right, but their action was protested to the classis, and further to Synod. Synod decided that these two parties could not be admitted as members.[179]

The Synod of 1945 was asked to rescind this decision, as well as the decisions of 1890 and 1908.[180] Instead, Synod decided to admit the members previously rejected *without* rescinding any of the previous decisions.[181] This inconsistency and its implications were pointed out to the Synod of 1946.[182] That body therefore rescinded the decision of 1945 and reverted to the stand of 1944, while it awaited the report of a study committee on the entire matter of divorce.[183]

That report, rendered and adopted in 1947, was in substantial agreement with the decisions of 1890, 1908, and 1944. It calls for renewed

177. Acts of Synod, 1890, p. 24; 1908, p. 39.
For this synopsis of the decisions I am indebted to Schaver, op. cit., p. 227.
178. E.g. Acts of Synod, 1934, p. 146; 1936, pp. 105 f.
179. Acts of Synod, 1944, pp. 57-61.
180. Acts of Synod, 1945, p. 67.
181. Ibid., p. 69.
182. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 48.
183. Ibid., p. 23.

emphasis by the leaders on the Scriptural principles pertaining to marriage. It reiterates that there is to be no compromise in the debarment of members who are guilty of un-Scriptural divorce and remarriage. Any person guilty of such a divorce and remarriage may be retained as a member only upon satisfactory evidence of repentance, which consists among other things in the forsaking of his second marriage. He is viewed otherwise as living in continual adultery. The only concession which is added to the previous decisions is the provision that such people can be admitted as members if they can prove to the satisfaction of the consistory that they committed these sins while living in complete ignorance of the teaching of the Word of God concerning the sinfulness of divorce and remarriage.[184]

In the recent divorce discussions it has been repeatedly asserted that the divorce problem is becoming increasingly a problem for the Christian Reformed Church. A representative utterance states that, "The evils of adultery and unbiblical divorce are increasing on every side. The danger for our own denomination is growing by the day."[185]

We therefore note two significant facts. The Christian Reformed Church is feeling the results of the growing divorce evil in America. But it has consistently rejected any departure from its firm stand on the matter, and its latest decision indicates a determined resistance to any weakening of its position.[186]

Because the Christian Reformed Church in America was for a short time a church of the frontier, the influence of that type of environment would presumably be felt to some degree. The character of the Christian Reformed people—a European group who took their church with them—makes comparison with the first generation of New England Puritans more apt than that with the post-Revolutionary frontiersman. Yet because of the benefit deriving from the experience of others, this group did not fully share the problems of the Puritans either. Let us posit a choice of the immigrant church between resistance and adaptation to the frontier.[187] Adaptation is necessary to the degree that resistance is impossible. The homogeneity of this group made it

184. Acts of Synod, 1947, pp. 65-69, 238-245.
185. Ibid., p. 66.
186. Other indications of the same spirit are found: in a testimony against birth control, Acts of Synod, 1936, pp. 136-138; and a warning against mixed marriages, Acts of Synod, 1944, p. 82.
187. On the choice between resistance and adaptation, cf. Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 145.

capable of stiff resistance, and kept adaptation of religion and morals to frontier conditions at a minimum. To a large degree the old folkways were preserved, a practice against which the younger generation long protested in vain. The watchful surveillance of relatives, friends, and neighbors of a like faith supported adherence to accepted customs and beliefs. There was no large falling away from religion. The church did in the early years deal with several moral discipline cases, but their number is not so large as to be significant.[188] Because in the case of the Christian Reformed people the frontier was sought in the interests of the church, the church rather than the frontier remained the dominant influence in their lives.

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A deliberate cultural and ecclesiastical isolation helped preserve the orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church. The use of the Dutch language, encouraged by the church, protected it from environmental influences during a critical period in the development of theology. The church viewed American religious developments with a critical eye. It was extremely cautious with respect to organic union with other denominations, entering into such a union only in one minor case. It severed relationships with the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America on the allegation of the liberalism of that organization. It joined the National Association of Evangelicals only when assured of its conservative basis. It gave expression to its desire for ecumenicity only through a Reformed Ecumenical Synod. It resisted the impact of the secular world in decisions on worldly amusements and the problem of divorce. The end of its language isolation, about 1918, makes the secular and religious environment increasingly a problem with which it has to deal.

188. A divorce case, Synodical Minutes Christian Reformed Church 1857-1880, p. 1 a (February 3, 1856).

A member selling liquor and neglecting church attendance, Ibid., p. 18 b (June 5, 1861).

A levirate marriage, Ibid., p. 65 (June 6, 1866).

CHAPTER V

An Integrated System of Religious Education

In Chapter III we noted how the Reformed system of ecclesiastical courts was diligently applied to the preservation of orthodoxy. We see now how another element of the Calvinistic system worked toward the same end when faithfully exercised. In keeping with its Calvinistic principles, the Christian Reformed Church has an integrated and thorough system of religious education. We shall trace the underlying philosophy of that education, its elements, and its effects upon the Christian Reformed Church.

The deepest root of the Christian Reformed conception of education is the covenant relationship of God and His people. With Calvin, the Christian Reformed Church views baptism as having come in the place of circumcision, and the covenantal relationships of the Old Testament to have passed over in large measure to the New.[1] In the further development of the covenant doctrine by both Scottish and Dutch theologians[2] it was clearly stated that this conception had distinct implications with respect to education. This is stated by Calvin himself, when he says, "We may conclude, therefore, that whatever belongs to circumcision, except the difference of the visible ceremony, belongs also to baptism."[3] The Israelitish children were to be instructed by their parents in the covenant relationship. This duty is assumed in the New Testament era by the parents who have their children baptized.[4] Dr.

1. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen (7th American edition: Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936) II, p. 604 (Bk. IV, Chap. XVI, sec. iii).

2. For an excellent discussion of this development, see Lewis Bevens Schenck, The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant, Vol. XII in "Yale Studies in Religious Education" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940).

3. Calvin, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 607 (Bk. IV, Chap. XVI, sec. iv).

4. "Christian nurture, beginning in infancy, inheriting traditional influences, and surrounded at the first dawn of consciousness by a religious atmosphere, is the normal and divine method of propagating the Church."
H. Van Dyke, quoted in Schenck, op. cit., p. 142.

Schenck points to a loss of this conception in the Presbyterian Churches:

> The historic doctrine of the church concerning children in the covenant and the significance of infant baptism has been to a large extent secretly undermined, hidden by the intrusion of an aberration from this doctrine.[5]

Having escaped some of the influences which contributed to that loss, the Christian Reformed Church held to the conception. The members of that church are generally agreed with Horace Bushnell that the children of believing parents are Christians, and should never know themselves to be otherwise.[6] Utterances of Christian Reformed leaders past and present give evidence of this. In 1875, editor G. E. Boer wrote in *De Wachter:*

> God has given children as heritages to the parents with a view to their nurture and preparation for their temporal and eternal well-being . . . These children have need not only of material goods as a temporal need, but they need also intellectual development as a requirement for their temporal life. Furthermore, they need the development of the heritage given them by God as a preparation for eternity. It is true that if the child is to be saved, God must give it conversion and regeneration through the Holy Spirit, but it is the practice of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this through the means of God's Word.[7]

To cite but one of many contemporary utterances, editor H. J. Kuiper writes in *The Banner,* February 28, 1947:

> We know that this life-giving Spirit works in the hearts of children as well as adults. We regard the children of believing parents as God's children, as long as they do not yield to wayward tendencies. We pray and labor that through our instruction and admonition the new life in them may unfold until they come to a conscious acceptance of Jehovah as their covenant-God and of Jesus Christ as their Lord and King; that they may weather the spiritual crisis which they are sure to face when they come to years of discretion; that they may choose for the King and his Kingdom against the evil world and all it contains.[8]

Every Christian Reformed parent who presents his child for baptism is reminded of this doctrine and its implications for education. The Baptismal Form includes this statement:

> Since, then, baptism has come in the place of circumcision, the children should be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant; and as they grow up, the parents shall be bound to give them further instruction in these things.[9]

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5. Schenck, op. cit., p. 158.
6. Horace Bushnell, Christian Nurture, revised by Luther Weigle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923) passim.
7. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 9 (July 22, 1875), p. 1.
8. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (February 28, 1947), p. 260.
9. "Form for the Baptism of Infants," Psalter Hymnal, p. 84.

Having been asked concerning their agreement with the doctrine of salvation as taught in the Christian Reformed Church, the parents are required to give an affirmative answer to this question:

> Third, do you promise and intend to instruct these children, when come to the years of discretion, in the aforesaid doctrine, and cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?[10]

It is apparent therefore that there is in the Christian Reformed Church no toleration of that theory in religious education which holds that indoctrination is morally indefensible. On the contrary, indoctrination of the youth of the Church is considered the normal function of the Church, not at all out of keeping with the operation of the Holy Spirit. This doctrine of the covenant is frequently mentioned in the worship services. It is mentioned at least once a year, when the Heidelberg Catechism sermons on Lord's Days XXV, XXVI, and XXVII, dealing with baptism, are delivered. Committed thus to a philosophy of indoctrination, the Christian Reformed Church participates in a system of religious education which, ideally at least, is complete, covering every phase of a child's nurture.

In describing the system of education, we begin with the home, because of the fundamental position which it occupies in that system. For an understanding of that position, we quote the Rev. Kuiper:

> The home is the cornerstone of the church and all our other institutions. There is no greater kingdom-need today than a determined, persistent movement to make our homes more Christian.[11]

And again:

> We may as well face the fact that all our efforts to multiply Christian schools and make them more distinctive will fail ultimately to prevent the loss of our spiritual heritage unless we do all we can to stay the secularization of our domestic life. . . . We must put forth strenuous efforts to save our homes if we would save our churches, our schools, and our other Christian institutions.[12]

The home bears a vital relationship to the other means of instruction. Full co-operation in the home is required in catechetical instruction.[13] The Christian school, likewise, is considered part of the discharge of parental duty with respect to the children.[14] But apart

10. Ibid.
11. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (Oct. 25, 1946), p. 1237.
12. Ibid. (Nov. 8, 1946), p. 1301.
13. "General Rules," adopted 1881, Art. 62a. Cf. Schaver, op. cit., p. 173.
14. De Wachter, Vol. VIII, no. 8 (July 8, 1875), p. 1.
Cf. also H. Beuker, "Thoughts with Reference to Public and Christian Schools," in De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (May, 1897), pp. 149 ff.

from these aids to parental instruction, the parents have their own duty to impart instruction directly. No specific rules are given for such instruction. Traditionally it has centered in the family altar. The old custom was that of Scripture reading and prayer three times daily, generally at meal times. Aids to such family worship are published in the "Family Circle" page of *The Banner* and in the *Daily Manna Calendar,* both of which are widely used. Assistance in family instruction is sometimes offered also through the "Christian Home and School" page of *The Banner.*[15] There has been some decline in this custom in the Christian Reformed Church as elsewhere,[16] but diligent efforts are made to revive and preserve it.[17]

The relationship of the home to the education of the children is supervised by the consistory. Although no definite rules govern the conduct of family visitation, a common subject of inquiry and admonition is family worship. The co-operation of the home with catechetical instruction is officially required:

> If parents do not send their minor children to attend catechetical instruction sufficiently, they shall be admonished; if they persist in their neglect, they shall be disciplined; and if this is of no avail, they shall be excommunicated.[18]

Because of its more formal nature, the ecclesiastical system of education can be given fuller treatment. We begin with a discussion of catechetical instruction, which has been part of the Reformed system from the beginning.[19] The discussion of catechetical instruction assumed large proportions at the Synod of Dort.[20] In keeping with this tradition, the Christian Reformed Church has held this means of in-

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15. Cf. H. Schultze, "Table Talk in the Home," in The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (March 14, 1947), p. 322.

16. "Personally I believe that a revival now of true, sincere family worship would do more for the Church of the future than anything else could do."
D. David Burrell in The Presbyterian. Quoted in The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (June 7, 1946), p. 709.
Quite naturally there are no tabulated data on the decline of this custom among the Christian Reformed people. But individual ministers sometimes complain, on the basis of their inquiries in family visitation, that the custom is indeed declining, in some cases alarmingly. To some extent, the complicated character of modern life makes this inevitable. The father works away from home, the children and the father depart at different times in the morning, and many of the evenings are taken up with outside activities. It is far less common than formerly to find the whole family assembled together in the home.

17. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (Oct. 25, 1946), p. 1237.

18. "General Rules", Art. 62 a. Cf. Schaver, op. cit., p. 173.
This rule is not universally applied. Cf. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (March 7, 1947), p. 292.

19. Cf. Lars P. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Thos. Nelson and Sons, 1940), p. 266.

20. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (May, 1897), p. 147.

struction in the highest regard.[21] It is properly the work of the ministers,[22] although, if the minister's schedule is too heavy, the work may be delegated to elders or other qualified teachers.[23]

The subject matter of catechetical instruction is sacred history and Reformed doctrine. Generally speaking, Old and New Testament stories are taught to the children of the ages five to twelve. Increasing emphasis is laid upon the implications of those stories as the children grow older. The time-honored question and answer method is still very much in evidence in the instruction of the younger children. From thirteen to sixteen the emphasis is upon doctrine. In the older age brackets a considerable development has taken place in the direction of adopting new methods of instruction.[24]

The ages listed above are not fixed by any definite decision. Since catechetical instruction was often given in connection with the Christian school, the earliest age of school children was also the earliest age for catechumens. At the other end of the age scale, it was assumed that a young person of sixteen would be ready to make confession of faith and would thus be at the end of the catechetical course. Neither age limit is normative. In some congregations, children do not begin to receive instruction until the age of nine. In others, instruction is continued after confession of faith is made, and there are adult classes for all who are interested in coming.

Synod has urged that catechetical instruction cover a nine-month term, although this ideal is by no means universally achieved.[25] The work of catechetical instruction is quite extensive at times. *De Wachter* of 1895 tells of one church in which twelve catechetical classes met weekly.[26] If this work was all left to the pastor, which is not stated, catechetical instruction must have composed a large proportion of his weekly work.

Efforts to improve the quality of the instruction have been continuous. In 1907 *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan* called for uniformity

21. "Catechetical instruction deserves first place in the instruction of our children." H. Van Hoogen in De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. IV (Oct., 1900), p. 429. "This indispensable institution." H. J. Kuiper in The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (March 7, 1947), p. 292.
22. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (Feb. 28, 1947), p. 260.
23. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. IV (Oct., 1900), p. 430. Acts of Synod, 1928, p. 37.
24. For a report reflecting much of this material, cf. Acts of Synod, 1924, pp. 343-357.
25. Acts of Synod, 1928, pp. 36 f.
26. De Wachter, Vol. XXVIII, no. 15 (June 5, 1895), p. 3.

in catechism books.[27] The Synod of 1912 received a report from a committee for the improvement of catechetical method[28] as did also the Synod of 1924.[29] Most recently, a series of editorials in *The Banner* has cited four catechetical "musts." They are: more catechism consciousness; more consistorial watchfulness; more parental co-operation; and more and better textbooks.[30] Among the improvements suggested at various times have been a uniform system of graded textbooks, the discarding of the question and answer method, and the broadening of the field of instruction in the older classes to include Church history, denominational history, and practical problems of daily life.[31] It should be stated that in spite of frequent criticisms of the question and answer method, some form of it remains in almost all catechetical instruction.

Through this system, the youth of the Christian Reformed Church is firmly grounded in Scriptural truth and doctrinal knowledge. Working hand in hand with other educational agencies, the catechism is an important means of arousing denominational consciousness and acquainting the members of the church with the position held by the church.

The education begun in catechism is continued in preaching. There is a strong doctrinal cast to much of the preaching. Perhaps it is significant that the Dutch expression designating a minister is "Herder en Leeraar," meaning literally, "pastor and teacher." The old custom in Dutch circles was to have a large portion of the sermon devoted to the exposition of a Scriptural text, and then, after a pause, the "Toepassing," or application of that text to life. Exposition and application are now more intermixed throughout the sermon, but the desire to teach remains an important part of the ministerial attitude.

The emphasis on education comes to its clearest expression in the so-called "Catechism sermons." The Church Order provides for such sermons in Article 68:

> The ministers shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of Christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the Catechism itself for that purpose.[32]

27. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. X (1906), pp. 37 ff., 71 ff.
28. Acts of Synod, 1912, pp. 125-129.
29. Acts of Synod, 1924, pp. 343-357.
30. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (March 7, 1947), p. 292.
31. Ibid., p. 352 (March 14, 1947).
32. Schaver, op. cit., p. 53.

As far as can be ascertained, the observance of this rule is universal. The methods employed may differ widely. One minister may treat a different Lord's Day every Sunday, while another may spend four successive weeks on one question and answer. One man may give a frank exposition of the Catechism itself, citing Scriptural proof, while another will select a text bearing upon the doctrine to be discussed and deliver an exegetical sermon on the text. Some ministers abide by the interpretation of the Synod of Dort in considering the Catechism essentially a simple explanation for the babes in the faith, while others consider Catechism sermons an intellectual exercise in which the deepest implications of the doctrines are to be sought out and discussed. Many helps to Catechism preaching have been published.[33]

Christian Reformed ministers are fortunate in having for their rule of doctrinal preaching a confession which is as experiential as is the Heidelberg Catechism.[34] They have thus a powerful influence to keep them from making their doctrinal discussions purely theoretical and abstract. Both as a means of instructing those whose knowledge is deficient and of keeping the various points of Reformed doctrine clearly before the minds of the people, this rule of Catechism preaching is highly important.

An educational agency which is not part of the historic Reformed system, but which has been adopted by the Christian Reformed Church, is the Sunday School. It was subjected to a great deal of criticism at first. In spite of its English origin,[35] it was viewed by the Christian Reformed people as a distinctively American institution, and hence subjected to some suspicion.[36] It was called a "necessary evil" and was viewed as a possible rival to Catechism. The leaders, however, favored its adoption by the Christian Reformed Church.[37] It was argued that both Sunday School and catechism could be maintained, as

33. Dutch expositions of the Catechism include those of A. Kuyper, J. Bavinck, Voetius, Knap, and Smytegeld.
For examples of Christian Reformed Catechism sermons at their best, see H. J. Kuiper, editor, Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1937), five volumes.

34. "The most sweet-spirited and experiential of the expositions of Calvinism." Cf. Schaff, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 307.

35. Cf. Walker, op. cit., p. 521.

36. De Wachter, Vol. X, no. 3 (April 26, 1877), p. 3.

37. De Wachter, Vol. XII, no. 2 (March, 1879), p. 1.
After advising the formation of Christian schools, Synod states, "It is also strongly urged that Sunday schools be held in every congregation." Acts of Synod, 1873, Art. 8.

means to work hand in hand for the instruction of the young.[38] When it was argued that to attend both church and Sunday school was too strenuous for small children, however, the same writer declared that if that were the case it was the Sunday school which should be omitted.[39] In course of time, Sunday school lessons were published weekly in *De Wachter,* at first in Dutch only, and later in both Dutch and English.[40]

The Sunday school as adopted by the Christian Reformed Church underwent some changes designed to make it fit into the educational system of the church. The lessons published in *De Wachter* were written under Christian Reformed auspices, although it was known that some congregations used the international lesson system.[41] In 1897 the distinctive task of the Sunday school was viewed as that of stressing chronology, geography, and cause and effect in the teaching of Biblical truth.[42] In 1904 the Synod tentatively accepted the offer of Mr. J. Tanis, of Paterson, New Jersey, to publish a quarterly for teachers, and a weekly "lesson leaf" for older and younger pupils respectively.[43]

In response to a request received in 1906, the proper relationship of Sunday school to Church was discussed. A committee reported on this matter in 1910, although the *Acts of Synod* for 1910 give no indication that their report was discussed.[44] Those reporting recognized that the Sunday school neither was nor could have been mentioned in the Reformed confessions. In their opinion it could not properly be considered as proceeding from the institutional Church. The relationship which they advised was that the consistory maintain supervision over the Sunday school, and that there be unity, agreement, and cooperation between Sunday school and catechism in the instruction given.

Another committee rendered a highly interesting report in 1918. They said it was evident that according to Reformed tradition the Sunday school could not be considered the primary instrument of the instruction of the seed of the Church. As a missionary agency it could readily find a place in the Church's system. But in its reference to the

38. De Wachter, Vol. XVII, no. 28 (Sept. 24, 1884), p. 2.
39. Ibid., no. 30 (Oct. 8, 1884), p. 2.
40. De Wachter, Vol. XXI, nos. 39 ff. (1888).
41. De Wachter, Vol. XXVII, no. 37 (1894), p. 4.
42. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (1897), pp. 409 ff.
43. Acts of Synod, 1904, p. 32.
44. Acts of Synod, 1910, Supplement XV, pp. 136 ff.

children of the Church, it was hard to assign the Sunday school a definite task beyond that of the instruction in home, catechism, and Christian school. The committee therefore recommended that the Christian Reformed Church should not undertake its own official lesson publications, but should continue to permit them to be published under independent auspices. The consistories, however, were to keep careful watch of the instructors, the instruction itself, and the Sunday school papers.[45] The position reflected in this report was adopted by the Synod.[46]

In spite of this attitude, however, the church undertook in 1936 to publish its own lesson material. The reason for this action was sharp criticism of the International Lesson System, particularly of the modernistic tendencies in it.[47] The Synod of 1937 approved the purchase of stock of the Instructor Publishing Company, which had been publishing independent lessons.[48] The Christian Reformed Church has since that time published its own Sunday school lesson helps, including *The Key, The Instructor, The Children's Comrade,* and *The Good News.*[49] These lesson helps are in universal use throughout the Christian Reformed Church. Thus ended a long process of adaptation by which the Sunday school was made part of the Christian Reformed educational system.

One other element of the ecclesiastical system of education may be mentioned, although it is not officially recognized as part of that system. In family visitation, the annual visit to each family in the congregation by a minister and an elder, there is personal application of the instruction given elsewhere. The purpose of family visitation is disciplinary rather than didactic. Yet, particularly when spiritual conditions are so good as to require little admonition, the visit may be used for eliciting and answering questions concerning doctrine and life which have occurred to the members.[50]

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45. Acts of Synod, 1918, pp. 137-151.
46. Ibid., p. 53.
47. Acts of Synod, 1936, pp. 79 f.
48. Acts of Synod, 1937, p. 45.
49. Cf. report in Acts of Synod, 1937, pp. 221-228.
50. Mention may also be made of instruction in societies. Most churches have Men's Societies, Ladies' Aids, and societies for the young people. Religious instruction plays a prominent part in all of these meetings. The Men's Societies generally follow the lesson outlines in The Federation Messenger, and the young people those in The Young Calvinist. Membership in these societies and attendance upon their meetings is of course not compulsory

No discussion of the Christian Reformed educational system would be complete without mention of the Christian day schools, although these are not managed by the Church itself, but by Christian School Societies. The desire to educate their own children in free Christian schools was an important consideration in inducing the settlers of 1847 to emigrate from the Netherlands.[51] Originally, the Christian schools in America did proceed from the Church itself, under ecclesiastical auspices. The original Classis Holland recorded this decision in 1848:

> Art. 6. Rev. Ypma proposes that the interests of the schools shall be discussed. The discussion takes place, and the judgment is; the schools must be promoted and cared for by the churches, as being an important part of the Christian calling of God's Church on earth. All lukewarmness and coldness toward that cause must be condemned and rebuked.[52]

That the idea of church schools was carried out also in the Christian Reformed Church is apparent from the *Acts of Synod,* 1886, where such schools are voted the hearty support of the synodical delegates.[53]

By 1892, however, the idea of societies for Christian education had come into favor, partly as a result of the ideas of Dr. A. Kuyper. The Synod of that year went on record as favoring such a society and promising it moral support, without recording any discussion to indicate how it had arrived at such a decision.[54] Scarcely a month after the Synod had met, such a society was organized and held its first meeting.[55] According to the report of this meeting, the organization proceeded upon the principle that the Christian education of children was the task neither of the State nor the Church, but of the parents. This principle was further elaborated in 1897. It was maintained that God had entrusted the parents with the nurture and education of the children. Parents were not permitted to entrust this holy task to anyone else. But Church and State can both assist parents in the discharge of this duty.[56] A later article lists actions taken by various sixteenth century Synods in the Netherlands to show that Christian education

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51. Brummelkamp and Van Raalte, Landverhuizing, of waarom bevorderen wij de volksverhuizing on wel naar Noord-Amerika en niet naar Java.
Cited in Hyma, op. cit., pp. 54 f.
Dr. Lucas considers this the second among four reasons for emigration.
Cited in Van den Bosch, op. cit., p. 9.

52. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, p. 34.

53. Acts of Synod, 1886, p. 34.

54. Acts of Synod, 1892, p. 12.

55. De Wachter, Vol. XXV, no. 21 (July 27, 1892), pp. 2, f.

56. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (May, 1897), pp. 149 ff.

was formerly considered the task of the Church. But the concern which consistories now have in the Christian school is analogous to that which they have in societies and other organizations to which the children of the Church belong.[57]

The present relationship of the Christian Reformed Church to Christian day schools may be outlined from the Church Order and various decisions of Synod. The Church Order, in Article 21, states:

> The Consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools where the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.[58]

Among the questions asked of each consistory at each classis meeting is the following: "Does the Consistory support the cause of the Christian schools?"[59] According to a synodical decision, the proper interpretation of this question is as follows:

> The term "schools" in Article 41 refers to the Christian primary and grammar and high schools (or academies) where the majority of our children get their general school education, as distinguished from technical and professional schools, while the college falls under the question of Article 41 in the measure in which it might become the common instrument of a general education. The expression "support the cause of Christian schools" means that it is the duty of the Consistory to use every proper means to the end that a Christian school may be established where it does not exist and to give whole-hearted and unreserved moral backing to existing Christian schools and a measure of financial help in case of need. If, in the judgment of a Classis, a Consistory does not support the cause of Christian schools, the Classis should continue earnestly to admonish such a Consistory publicly in its classical meetings and privately through the church visitors until it truly repents.[60]

Other synodical decisions with reference to the Christian schools are these:

> Positively Christian instruction according to Reformed principles is the undeniable requisite for Reformed Christians. Not generally but definitely Reformed instruction is requisite for our children. . . . The need of such instruction is earnestly urged upon all our members, and especially on all our Consistories.[61]
>
> All our leaders are urged to lend this cause their whole-hearted moral and financial support.[62]
>
> Although such as heartily support Christian instruction do not thereby automatically qualify for nomination as office bearers, this element should be given very weighty consideration, and Consistories are advised to do so.[63]

57. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XI (Dec., 1907), pp. 541 ff.
58. Schaver, op. cit., p. 43.
59. Ibid., p. 48.
60. Acts of Synod, 1936, pp. 36 f.
61. Acts of Synod, 1898, pp. 38 f.
62. Acts of Synod, 1932, p. 42.
63. Acts of Synod, 1934, p. 167.

It will appear from the above quotations that while the Christian schools are not church-owned, they definitely are church-related. The reason for having church-related rather than parochial schools is the consideration cited above, that the Christian education of children is the task neither of the Church nor of the State, but of Christian parents. This consideration is ostensibly based upon Old Testament example and precept. The Christian schools receive moral and financial aid from the Christian Reformed Church. There is some present dissatisfaction with the extent of this relationship. It is contended that it ought to include a closer spiritual supervision of the schools by the Church.[64] But even that would fall short of making these schools parochial schools, as they have sometimes mistakenly been called.

As we consider briefly the financing of the Christian day schools, the connection of the Christian Reformed Church with this movement again becomes evident. Although there are both pupils and school board members in the Christian school system who are not members of the Christian Reformed Church, it is quite safe to say that by far the greater portion of the financial support of that system comes from Christian Reformed churches and people. Offerings for Christian school causes are an accepted custom in Christian Reformed Churches. Some churches have envelopes for this cause, some take a special collection for the local Christian school at least once a month, while others have a box conveniently placed in the church building into which contributions can be dropped. Among the eight causes which the Synod of 1946 recommended to the churches for one or more free-will offerings, no less than three are Christian school causes. They are the National Union of Christian Schools, the Teachers' Emergency Relief Fund, and the Christian School Pension and Trust Fund.[65]

Another means of support for the Christian schools is found in the societies which manage them. A model constitution for such societies provides for active membership for every person over twenty-one years of age who contributes dues in excess of $12.00 per annum. Associate membership is granted to persons of all ages who contribute at least $0.50 per month.[66] Although this is presented as the model,

64. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (April 25, 1947), p. 516.
65. Acts of Synod, 1936, p. 124.
66. Model Constitution for Parent-Society Christian Schools (Chicago: National Union of Christian Schools).

the terms of membership are left to the discretion of the individual society. Such societies frequently sponsor annual "drives" for funds, involving house-to-house canvassing of the members of Christian Reformed congregations and other known friends of Christian education.

Parents and guardians of children attending the school may contribute in any one of several ways. Some societies establish a specified sum designated as tuition. Usually a reduction is offered when more than one child of a given family attend the same school. Another method is to collect pledges from society members, calling attention to the cost-price per child in case the member has children attending the school.[67] Most schools make it a practice not to bar any child for failure to receive the full tuition, provided it can be established that the parents are financially unable to bear this burden. In some cases, Christian Reformed consistories have helped such needy families through contributions from the Benevolence Fund.

It is a generally recognized fact that the members of the Christian Reformed Church were and are people of modest means, although their living standard in America is higher than it was in the Netherlands.[68] Therefore it is the more surprising that they were able to bear this educational burden. This consideration is in itself an indication of the way in which the ideal of Christian education is cherished. The burden imposed by the maintenance of special schools was not light in the beginning, and it has never been so since, either in depression or inflationary times. Nevertheless, the movement has progressed steadily. The present value of educational plants and equipment is substantial, although no comprehensive figures are available for it.

The question arises how these Christian schools compare with the public schools in certain particulars. The salaries of Christian school teachers are generally lower than those given in public schools. In some cases the hardships thus worked upon Christian school teachers have been so great that they have been forced, in the interests of their dependents, to take more lucrative positions in the public school system. The Christian school buildings, in communities where the movement is well established, compare not unfavorably with those of the public

67. Ibid.
68. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (1897), p. 472.

schools, although in general they are not as elaborate. Academic standards in the Christian schools are at least as high, if not higher, than those in the public schools. Athletic equipment and emphasis is on a far lower level in the Christian schools than in the public schools, although there has been a considerable development in this respect in recent years.

We may now submit a few indications of the educational philosophy which underlies the Christian school. We have already noted that the covenant idea is the greatest influence leading to the establishment of these schools. Various writers have developed that theme in book form.[69] A recent writer, however, comments that "just what covenantal training meant and implied they have not been able to state and express." He therefore calls for further study of the matter.[70] We have also mentioned various comments on the Christian school as a means for teaching the Dutch language, including that of one writer who thought this was the primary reason for such schools. In the last analysis, however, this could not even have been an essential part of the reason for Christian schools, since such schools were part of the original purpose of the immigrants in coming to America.

We find that the philosophy of the Christian school movement begins with criticism of the public schools. Without this element, all reason for separate schools falls away. That criticism was made early, although not all of the Dutch settlers in Western Michigan were agreed in making it. Both of these facts are reflected in a series of articles which appeared in *De Wachter* in 1892. The editor of *De Grondwet,* the widely read, religiously neutral Dutch newspaper, argued that Christian schools in Western Michigan were superfluous. In that locality, he said, education proceeded not from the State, but from the parents. He granted that those parents had not kept the public schools as Christian in spirit as they ought to have done, but viewed that as a matter of their neglect, and not as any warrant for the establishment of a separate school system.[71]

To this the editor of *De Wachter* replied:

> It is not to be expected that the people in general of this broad land will ever support the principle of making the public schools Christian

69. Cf. G. W. Hylkema, The Free Christian School (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.); J. Broene, Some Current Educational Ideals (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1913).
70. R. Postma in The Christian Home and School Magazine, Vol. XXVI (July-August, 1947), p. 5, col. 1.
71. De Wachter, Vol. XXV, no. 21 (July 27, 1892), p. 1.

> according to the standards of God and His Word. . . . If all the citizens of this country have the right to vote, and if each stands upon the principles of his own religious views respecting the schools, we stand before a clear alternative; we must establish as many kinds of schools as there are divisions in religion, or take religion out of the schools; make a school which is above religious divisions.[72]

The argument thus centers about the question, "Can the public schools be Christian?" The advocates of the Christian school took the negative position. The argument was reopened in 1895, when G. J. Diekema, mayor of Holland, Michigan, addressed a gathering in that city on the subject of the Christian school. His address clearly implied that the Christian schools were un-American.[73] He quoted from various documents to show that, "Not only are our schools Christian, but our country itself is Christian." He then outlined a program of activity through which the local parents could preserve the Christian character of local schools.[74]

In the course of the debate provoked by this address it became apparent that the proponents and opponents of Christian schools differed in their interpretation of what constituted a Christian education. One writer took pains to point out that Reformed people could not be satisfied with an education which was broadly based on the Apostles' Creed.[75] He further pointed out that Michigan law forbade sectarian religious teaching in the public schools.[76] The position of the Christian school supporters was clearly that of a specifically Reformed, rather than broadly Christian instruction.[77] It is interesting to note that, in view of the spread of the Christian school idea to other groups, the same distinction still calls for comment. A contemporary writer says:

> Calvinism stands out as a particular interpretation of Christianity. With the coming of Christian schools sponsored by groups other than those of the Reformed tradition, we are faced with a danger. We must encourage these fellow Christians and co-operate with them, but how far should we go? May we never co-operate with them to the extent of giving up the Calvinistic interpretation of life that our Christian school founders sought so vigorously to impart to their children.[78]

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72. **Ibid.**, Also no. 22 (August 3, 1892), p. 1.

73. "The American flag flies over the public school. In the public school the child learns patriotism. The child does not remain German, Dutch, or Italian. They all become American."
De Wachter, Vol. XXVIII, no. 38 (Nov. 13, 1895), p. 1.

74. **Ibid.**, p. 2.

75. **De Wachter**, Vol. XXVIII, no. 40 (Nov. 27, 1895), p. 2.

76. **Ibid.**, no. 45 (January 1, 1896), p. 2.

77. **Ibid.**, no. 37 (Nov. 6, 1895), p. 2.

78. John Van Bruggen, "At the Crossroads," in **The Christian Home and School Magazine**, Vol. XXVI (July-August, 1947), p. 7.

The same high standards were reflected in the consideration of Bible reading in the schools. The Hon. G. J. Diekema had pointed out that Iowa permitted Bible reading in the public schools of that State.[79] But this position was far from satisfying the proponents of Christian schools. In 1901, Christian Reformed readers were informed as to the general state of Bible reading in the public schools, on the basis of a report of the Commissioner of Education.[80] According to that report, the Bible was read in 79% of the schools. The states fell into five classes with respect to Bible reading. In nine states, Bible reading rested upon a constitutional basis. In twelve states, it was based upon authoritative court decisions. In sixteen states, the Bible was read by virtue of public opinion or long established custom. In three states no Bible reading was reported, although it was known that it was read in some schools. In five states, authoritative court opinions opposed Bible reading. The writer called upon Christians to improve this situation.[81] But this Christian duty of encouraging Bible reading in the public schools was seen as something apart from the question of separate schools. Such encouragement could effectively be given in localities where Christians were in the majority. But unless a given community were specifically, not to say exclusively, Reformed, the necessity of separate Christian schools remained.[82]

Even a universal Bible reading would not have satisfied the proponents of the Christian school. It was pointed out that the Christian school should not merely add sacred history to the public school curriculum, but should combat basic errors in modern pedagogy.[83] The public school was criticized for teaching mere ethical idealism[84] and for fostering a materialistic outlook upon life.[85] The "antithesis" frequently mentioned as existing between public and Christian education[86] later took the form of a consistent opposition to the teaching of the evo-

79. "In Iowa there is a law which reads as follows; the Bible may not be barred from any school or institution of this State, but it may not be required of any child that he read the Bible against the will of his parents or guardians."
De Wachter, Vol. XXVIII, no. 38 (Nov. 13, 1895), p. 2.

80. Report of the Commissioner of Education 1897-1898, Vol. II, pp. 1560-1561. Cited in De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. V (Nov., 1901), pp. 509-511.

81. Ibid., p. 511.

82. De Wachter, Vol. XVIII, no. 37 (Nov. 6, 1895), p. 2.

83. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XVI (August, 1912), p. 362.

84. Ibid., (May, 1912), p. 223.

85. Ibid., (March, 1912), p. 130.

86. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XVI (August, 1912), p. 362.

lutionary hypothesis. Other specific points in public school education were also singled out for criticism.[87] Positively, it was held that in the Christian school all instruction in science and other fields of knowledge should be in harmony with the Bible.[88] Other tasks which the Christian school assumed were proper instruction in discipline[89] and building Christian character.[90]

In carrying out its principles, the Christian school movement has faced the two practical problems of providing Christian teachers and textbooks. The earliest teachers had their education in the Netherlands. As late as 1884, when the complaint was raised that some badly needed teachers were going into theological training, relief was sought from the Netherlands. Rather than set up a school for training teachers, the aggrieved parties were advised to call teachers from Holland. "I think you will still find there plenty of competent teachers, trained in the Christian schools, who will be well pleased with a call from America."[91] This opinion was proved correct.[92]

As dependence upon the Netherlands decreased in other respects, insistence upon a local teacher supply grew. A writer in 1903 advocated the adoption of two measures. The literary department of the denomination's school in Grand Rapids ought to be broadened, both through the addition of more professors and through an increase in the number of those preparing for a teaching career. Beyond this, a system should be devised whereby graduates of this literary department could serve an apprenticeship under the supervision of experienced teachers in the Christian schools.[93] This writer also suggested that the outstanding pupils be permitted to help in the education of the younger pupils, and if they showed an aptitude for teaching, they should be tutored by the principal of the school, and then sent on for more formal education. Steps were taken in the direction of training teachers in the denomination's school. In 1894 the privilege of studying in that school was

87. Criticisms were occasionally based on misinterpretations, with amusing results. Wilson's Fourth Reader was accused of fostering profanity because it spoke of "confounded cucumbers." "Confounded" was translated "verdoemde," English, "accursed." Cf. De Wachter, Vol. XXVIII, no. 39 (Nov. 20, 1895), p. 1.

88. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church (1923 ed.), p. 221.

89. De Wachter, Vol. XXV, no. 22 (August 3, 1892), p. 2.

90. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. V (June, 1901), p. 268.

91. De Wachter, Vol. XVII, no. 28 (Sept. 17, 1884), p. 3.

92. Acceptance of an appointment by a teacher in the Netherlands. Cf. De Wachter, Vol. XVII, no. 44 (February, 1885), p. 2.

93. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. VII (February, 1903), p. 51.

given to those who were not training for the ministry.[94] In 1914 the first Bachelor of Arts degree was conferred, and Calvin College has since that time remained the largest single source of teacher supply for the Christian schools.[95]

The need of special textbooks for the Christian school was mentioned in 1903. It was recognized that such books were available in the Netherlands, but it was not deemed advisable to translate them for use in America.[96] This need has been slow in fulfillment, the system making use of non-Christian texts with necessary reservations and adaptations. A writer in 1947 feels constrained to say:

> Christian school textbooks are more of a necessity now than they ever were before this time. We must face the question of what makes a book a Christian textbook. It is more than secular book plus a few Christian utterances and stories. It must be distinctive in its language as well as its content and underlying philosophy.[97]

Christian schools were established almost immediately when the immigrants came to America and have experienced a steady growth since that time. In his report in 1849, Dr. Wyckoff could write:

> The colony is paying as much attention as possible to schools and Christian education. They have a Dutch school and an English one in the city; at Zeeland a Dutch school, and will soon have an English school, and all the rest will follow.[98]

The first Christian school in Grand Rapids was established in 1855.[99] The first such school in Kalamazoo, Michigan, was opened in 1876.[100] By 1880 Grand Rapids had three Christian school buildings, with a large attendance in summer, but smaller in winter.[101] Other schools in operation before 1885 were Kellogsville, Michigan, in 1880, Grand

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94. **Semi-Centennial Volume Theological School and Calvin College 1876-1926** (Grand Rapids, 1926), p. 128.

95. Ibid., p. 57.
The Christian schools are suffering much as are the public schools from the current teacher shortage. Cf. H. Schultze, "The Problem of Teacher Shortage," convention address of the National Union of Christian Schools, in the **Christian School Annual, 1946.**

96. **De Gereformeerde Amerikaan,** Vol. VII (February, 1903), pp. 52-55.

97. **Christian Home and School Magazine,** Vol. XXVI (July-August, 1947), p. 6.
The newly appointed educational director of the National Union of Christian Schools has as part of his task to be in charge of the production and publication of educational aids, materials, and textbooks.
Ibid., p. 2.
"Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company of this city (Grand Rapids) has just issued a new course of study for Christian schools. Comprising nearly four hundred pages, this course has been prepared in answer to a long-felt need. Many attempts of a local nature have been made to satisfy demands for a course of study for Christian schools, and this new course has made every effort to utilize the experience gained."
Cf. **United Evangelical Action,** Vol. VI (Sept. 15, 1947), pp. 19 f.

98. **Christian Home and School Magazine,** Vol. XXVI (July-August, 1947), p. 3.

99. Ibid.

100. **De Wachter,** Vol. IX, no. 7 (June 22, 1876), p. 4.

101. **De Wachter,** Vol. XIII, no. 27 (Nov. 18, 1880), p. 2.

Haven, Michigan, in 1880, Muskegon, Michigan, in 1881, and Roseland, Chicago, in 1884.[102] There are at present 106 Christian schools, of which 98 are in Christian Reformed communities. In addition there are eleven Christian High Schools, six of them organized during the past decade. These schools have an enrollment of 19,837 and employ 659 teachers.[103] These schools are members of the National Union of Christian Schools, which now employs a full-time educational director as well as a promotional secretary.

Interest of other religious groups in the cause of Christian education has increased greatly during the past few years. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has favored the movement, and several Christian schools are found among its members.[104] Another significant development is the decision of the National Association of Evangelicals, at its convention in Omaha in April, 1947, to further the cause of Christian education through definite action.[105] That Association, not without some opposition on the part of some member churches,[106] established the National Association of Christian Schools, which is to set up offices in Chicago and work in close co-operation with the National Union of Christian Schools, which maintains offices in the same city.[107] The official organ of the National Union of Christian Schools is the *Christian Home and School Magazine,* a monthly now in its 26th year, with a subscription list of 14,000. The 1947 promotional issue was sent to 30,000 homes.[108]

In evaluating the relationship of the Christian school movement to the Christian Reformed Church and Christian Reformed orthodoxy, it must be noted that not all Christian Reformed parents send their children to the Christian schools. The promotional secretary of the National Union of Christian Schools sets the proportion at about 50%. Granting that some families live too far from established schools for reasonably easy transportation and that some Christian Reformed com-

102. Christian School Statistics 1946, pp. 6-9.
103. Ibid.
104. Such schools are found at Willow Grove, Philadelphia, and Middletown, Pennsylvania.
Ibid., p. 9.
105. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (July 25, 1947), p. 887.
106. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (Nov. 15, 1946), p. 1336.
107. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (May 9, 1947), p. 581.
Ibid., (Jan. 10, 1947), p. 38.
108. Christian Home and School Magazine, Vol. XXVI (July-August, 1947), p. 2.

munities are too weak financially to support their own schools, the percentage of those who favor this agency is still far short of overwhelming. The Protestant Reformed Church has a better record in this respect, with about 80% of the children attending Christian schools.[109] These figures show that even the whole-hearted and unequivocal support of the Christian school movement which the Christian Reformed Church has given throughout its history has not succeeded in convincing all of its members of the necessity of a Christian education.

That the church has officially supported the movement is perfectly plain. This reflects favorably on the sincerity with which convictions were held by members and leaders alike. Often the official support came at personal cost, since the pastor of a local church would have to share the sacrifice of his congregation through receiving a salary smaller than it would have been without the drain on community finances caused by a Christian school. Christian Reformed orthodoxy must be viewed in this light as highly practical as well as theoretical.

Again in the case of the Christian school, that orthodoxy is seen as involving a degree of isolation. One oft-repeated criticism of Christian schools is that they lead Christians to neglect their duty to keep the public schools on a high level.[110] In spite of protestations to the contrary, this must be admitted, at least in part. Christian schools have tended in the direction of segregation and isolation. There is something of this spirit in Christian Reformed orthodoxy; "Let us take care of ourselves first." It is indeed sometimes argued that "we owe it to our country to support Christian schools." But the validity of this reasoning is open to question. That there is a degree of patriotism and a realization of the responsibilities of citizenship is not to be denied. But that this patriotism is religiously conditioned is also beyond question.

Perhaps the most significant deduction from the support of the Christian school is the consistency and thoroughness manifested in the Christian Reformed efforts at education. That the Christian school

109. Ibid., p. 13.

110. Cf. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (Jan. 10, 1947), p. 38.
"There are those who ask, 'Is it not un-American to establish and support private schools?' Back of the question is the fear that failure to give all-out support to our present Public School system is unpatriotic."

idea is in keeping with covenant doctrine is easily argued. If children are to grow up without knowing themselves to be anything but Christian, consistency demands that the tremendous influence which the school exerts upon the young be brought into line with that purpose. The Christian Reformed evaluation of the truth as they conceive of it is such that they will go to great lengths to preserve it.

That the Christian school has helped to preserve the consciousness of the Reformed way of life is taken for granted in Christian Reformed circles. The majority of Christian Reformed ministers are products of the Christian school system. The charge is still made that the Christian schools exist for the primary purpose of promoting Christian Reformed denominational consciousness.[111] While it is specifically denied upon good grounds that this is a primary purpose of such schools, it is undeniable that such a denominational consciousness is an important by-product of Christian education.

The educational system of which the Christian school is a part tends definitely toward a sheltered life for covenant children. The general success of such a policy of sheltering is attended by some notable setbacks. Dr. Van den Bosch speaks of a "draining off at the top" of the social scale.[112] In the literary, medical, and political fields there are some men who have traversed the entire scale of Christian education and then severed connections with the Christian Reformed Church, sometimes openly repudiating its theological position. Such instances, however, have always been and remain the exception rather than the rule. Generally speaking, the policy of indoctrination as here applied has proved successful in its purpose.

In education above the high school level, the Christian Reformed Church is involved more directly. In response to many pleas,[113] a literary department was added to the Theological School in 1896. Two instructors were appointed for literary work exclusively in 1894.[114] Instruction at that time was on the Academy level,[115] and was concerned almost exclusively with the preparation of future ministers. Develop-

111. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (August 15, 1947), pp. 932, 944.
112. Van den Bosch, op. cit., p. 98.
113. De Wachter, Vol. XXIX, no. 4 (March 25, 1896), pp. 1 f.
De Wachter, Vol. XXXI, no. 22 (July 20, 1898), p. 2.
114. Semi-Centennial Volume, pp. 52 f.
115. Ibid., p. 59.

ment into the full college course was gradual. The first Bachelor of Arts degrees were conferred in 1914.[116]

It will be noted immediately that there is an apparent discrepancy between the principle adopted with respect to grade school education and the fact that the church owns and operates Calvin College. This question was presented for discussion at no less than eleven synods between 1896 and 1926.[117] In 1912, Synod declared itself in favor of a society-supported college, and took steps to organize such a society.[118] The following Synod, however, decided that the time was not yet ripe for such a step.[119] In 1926 it was definitely decided to continue the existing relationship.[120] The committee reporting on this matter summarized its findings as follows:

> 1. It is perfectly plain that in principle a school for the study of the general sciences ought to proceed from private initiative.
>
> 2. The principle of the free school has never, however, been viewed as so fundamental by Reformed authorities that they considered every departure from that principle reprehensible. For the most part they were willing to adjust themselves to the circumstances, provided proper recognition was made of the religious element in training.
>
> 3. It is undoubtedly true that it is not part of the calling of the Church as an institution to further general science and to found schools with a view to that purpose. The Church does indeed have the *potestas docendi,* but it does not specifically follow from this that she must apply herself to the furtherance of science.
>
> 4. History, however, teaches us very plainly that Reformed people in Holland, Scotland, and America have not considered it unjustifiable for the Church to found and support schools of higher education, particularly if the Church considers them essential to her own welfare. As a rule they permit themselves to be guided by practical considerations.[121]

These practical considerations in this case were: the necessity of literary training for theological students; the difficulty in organizing a society financially capable of supporting a college; the desire to preserve the faith of those who sought higher education; and the rising tide of liberalism, which necessitated close supervision by the church.[122] The result is that the physical properties of Calvin College are owned by the Christian Reformed Church. The college is supported in large

116. Ibid., p. 67.

117. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1896, Art. 114b; 1898, Art. 76; 1900, Art. 39; 1902, Art. 39; 1904, Art. 89; 1908, Art. 37; 1910, Art. 56; 1912, Art. 36; 1914, Art. 35; 1920, Art. 28; 1926, p. 30.

118. Acts of Synod, 1912, pp. 30 f.

119. Acts of Synod, 1914, pp. 29 f.

120. Acts of Synod, 1926, p. 30.

121. Agenda for the Synod, 1926, pp. 38 f.

122. Ibid., pp. 39-41.

part by an assessment levied on every Christian Reformed congregation. The assessment in 1947 was $5.00 per church family.[123] This quota covered the expenses of both college and seminary. Supervision of the college is by a Board of Trustees answerable directly to Synod.

Calvin College has expanded into an institution with a present enrollment of 1500. It offers the following four-year courses; general college, seminary preparatory, and teacher's courses, all leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree. Three-year preparatory courses are offered in the fields of medicine, law, dentistry, and business administration. Two-year pre-engineering and pre-forestry and a one-year pre-nursing course are also included. Expansion of the teaching staff and the student body have been very rapid since the end of World War II. Calvin College maintains membership in the North Central Association.[124] Graduates of the college have made good records in graduate study. Certain courses in Bible and Reformed Doctrine are required of every student enrolled. Chapel is held daily, with compulsory attendance.[125] Religious counsellors are appointed with whom every student must have an annual conference. The college attempts to enforce the Synodical stand of 1928 on worldy amusements.

Beyond the college level, the Christian Reformed Church maintains Calvin Seminary, formerly called the Theological School, out of which Calvin College grew. The Seminary was founded in 1876, with one professor, the Rev. G. E. Boer, although the Rev. D. J. Vander Werp had given theological instruction to prospective ministers before that time.[126] A second professor was added in 1884 and a third in 1886.[127] The present staff of teachers includes six full-time professors. A recent decision of Synod favors the establishment of a chair of missions as a seventh position.[128]

Almost without exception, the ministers of the Christian Reformed Church are trained at Calvin Seminary. The Synod of 1924 decided that students who had studied elsewhere should be required to take the courses of the final Seminary year at Calvin to be eligible for a Chris-

123. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 109.
124. Acts of Synod, 1930, p. 19.
125. Present overcrowded conditions make it impossible for everyone to attend daily.
126. Semi-Centennial Volume, p. 24.
127. Ibid., p. 28.
128. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 109.

tian Reformed charge.[129] The following Synod flatly refused to make any concessions in this stand.[130]

Since the Seminary occupies a central position in the church, the church wisely exercises great caution in the appointment of professors.[131] In a discussion of the question, "Do we need scholarship or sound principles most of all in our theological professors?" both sides were argued, but the emphasis was finally laid upon the principles.[132] Prospective students are also carefully examined before admission to the seminary. On occasion, several have been rejected because of unsatisfactory views.[133]

The church makes a diligent effort to maintain the standards of its ministerial training at a high level. The degree of Bachelor of Theology is granted to graduates of Calvin Seminary only upon the fulfillment of rigid requirements. A student who has maintained a better than average scholastic standing is permitted, near the close of his senior year, to take a comprehensive oral examination. Success in that examination entitles him to the degree. Action taken in 1930 led to the granting of the degree of Master of Theology.[134] Steps have also been taken to introduce courses leading to the degree of Doctor of Theology.[135] The theological position of the seminary is conservative. The church has not hesitated to dismiss professors whose doctrine and life did not meet the required standards.[136] The Christian Reformed Church stands committed to the principle of an educated ministry.[137] The only exception to the rule of a seminary education for ministers[138] is very seldom applied.[139] But the church is also determined that the

129. Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 38

130. Acts of Synod, 1928, pp. 74 f.

131. Ibid., pp. 70-72.

132. De Wachter, Vol. XXVI, no. 27 (September 6, 1893), p. 1.
Ibid., no. 29 (September 20, 1893), p. 1.

133. Acts of Synod, 1928, pp. 188 f.

134. Acts of Synod, 1930, p. 24.

135. Acts of Synod, 1940, p. 90.

136. Acts of Synod, 1922, pp. 137 f.
Acts of Synod, 1928, p. 90.

137. Of the 377 Christian Reformed ministers, at least 23 hold doctor's degrees earned at recognized institutions. Many others have had one or more years of graduate study after seminary.
Cf. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1947, pp. 27-53.

138. Church Order, Art. 8. Cf. Schaver, op. cit., p. 41.

139. "This article should function only in case of great need."
Acts of Synod, 1947, p. 94.

education of its ministers shall be in thorough accord with its standards.[140]

From time to time expression has been given to sectional jealousy in reference to higher education. Outlying sections of the church feel that the location of the college shows favoritism to the Grand Rapids area.[141] Something of this spirit was manifested in the establishment of a college at Grundy Center, Iowa, which appealed to Synod for support. This support was granted, with the understanding that instruction should be on the academy level.[142] The school, however, continued to seek to give instruction on the college and seminary levels. It was advised to drop this attempt.[143] In 1920 it was agreed to permit the Iowa school the status of a junior college.[144] The school existed on that basis for a little more than a decade, but failed financially during the economic depression of 1930-1936, and the project was abandoned. Recently agitation for the establishment of a junior college has been resumed, but without thus far leading to any concrete results.[145]

The consciousness of the need for training lay workers for church and mission activity grew gradually in the Christian Reformed Church. Various independent and local efforts were made in this direction. In 1942, the Synod recommended one of these projects, conducted in Grand Rapids, to the support of the denomination.[146] This "Reformed Bible Institute" has experienced a rapid growth. Other such institutions are maintained at Chicago, Holland, Michigan, and Paterson, New Jersey.[147]

The institutions described above comprise the extent of the Christian Reformed educational system to date, although it is hoped to expand Calvin College into a university in the future. In all of the institutions described there is a remarkable unity of world-and-life view, and in most of them a strong denominational consciousness. It is virtually

140. Students are examined by the Board of Trustees upon entrance to the seminary and upon receiving licensure to preach at the end of the junior seminary year. They are examined by Synod before being declared candidates and by the classis in which they will serve before ordination.

141. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XIII (August, 1909), pp. 435 ff.

142. Acts of Synod, 1916, p. 33.

143. Acts of Synod, 1918, p. 90.

144. Acts of Synod, 1920, pp. 63 f.

145. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1947, p. 22.

146. This development is a concession to the appeal of Institute training among other Christian groups. It won support only over determined opposition, which described such schools as un-Reformed.

147. Cf. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church (1946 ed.), pp. 129 f.

impossible for a Christian Reformed child to grow up without coming into close contact with one or more of these educational agencies. Such an integrated and close-knit educational system undoubtedly contributes somewhat to a certain narrowness of outlook. On the other hand, it certainly contributes to the avowed purpose for which it exists, *viz.*, the preservation of the orthodox Calvinistic theology and view of life. That the narrowness to which it contributes is not more extreme is due to the breadth and scope and recognized excellence of that Calvinistic system.

* * * * * * * * * *

The Christian Reformed Church, through its adherence to covenant theology, stands committed to a philosophy of indoctrination of its youth. The educational task is considered primarily that of the parents, and the home is viewed as the cornerstone of the other institutions. The ecclesiastical system of education includes catechetical instruction, which is of basic importance, doctrinal preaching, and the Sunday school, which has been adapted to Christian Reformed use. A distinctive and highly important element of the system of instruction is the free (i.e. not Church-controlled) Christian day school, with which the Christian Reformed Church maintains close connections. The church supports its own college and seminary, and supervises their religious instruction and doctrinal position very carefully. This educational system, while it has contributed to some narrowness of outlook, and while it has failed to produce the desired results in some individuals, has contributed greatly to the maintenance of orthodoxy. It constitutes a faithful application of traditional Reformed agencies, with the adaptation of new agencies, to that purpose.

CHAPTER VI

Efforts to Influence the Environment in a Positive Way

In the preceding chapters we have seen the Christian Reformed Church to be concerned consistently with preserving the heritage of doctrine and custom with which it was endowed. Among the means used to preserve that heritage were a deliberate isolation from surrounding influences and a determined effort to educate its own people. Near the conclusion of Chapter V we noted a tendency to be concerned with internal education to the extreme of isolation and segregation. The advantages of this policy in preserving a rigid orthodoxy are easily seen. But those advantages are accompanied by the threat of a dead orthodoxy, resulting in stagnation. Among the facts treated in the preceding chapters there are no substantial safeguards against this danger.

The danger, however, is one which is recognized in the Christian Reformed Church, and the fear of it has come to repeated expression. On the one hand, it is recognized that a church which is preoccupied merely with perpetuating itself and its doctrine will die in spite of itself through a lack of positive incentives. On the other hand, the very appreciation of the doctrinal system which is held leads to a desire to spread the truth and let the benefits of the heritage be felt by others. After commenting on the success of the denominational radio program, a recent writer proceeds to state the responsibility of the Christian Reformed Church as follows:

> The situation poses at least three acute, in some respects painful problems . . .
>
> First — Are we willing to recognize and accept the new challenge produced by the success of our witness? Are we willing to follow words with missionary action, and go from the stage of witness to the American world to that of a Church for the American world?
>
> Second — If we should find this the honest and logical consequence of our witness, shall we be able, while casting off the last remnants of our traditional isolation, to preserve its treasure and its power?

> Third — and this is the most crucial — is there enough spiritual vitality in us to successfully absorb those who may respond to our witness and effort, and who come to us from the outside?[1]

Another writer expressed himself in similar vein:

> To infer that our Calvinism will suffer if we cross the bounds of isolationism is a slur on the very teaching we love, and would suggest that it was not of God. We know better. We shall not thus lose our identity, but will impress it on many, many souls yet scattered through the world.[2]

Although these and other writers speak in terms of new challenges and the disappearance of Christian Reformed isolation, the need of an outgoing influence was felt and recognized many years ago. The Classical Assembly of July 22, 1863, at that time the highest assembly of the Christian Reformed Church, appointed a committee to receive funds for mission work.[3] Advocating an annual offering for missions, a writer stated in 1878:

> Also with a view to our own church there is certainly great reason to support missions. If that church is to avoid death by stagnation, she must exercise and develop her fellowship with God and with Jesus as Mediator in the work of love, and that work finds a fitting place on the mission field.
>
> A church which does not love missions, but works for itself alone and shuts itself up within itself, is in danger that it will wither and die for want of vitality, by which it is spiritually crippled, and for want of that fresh air which is enjoyed only where love works outward as well as inward.[4]

The fact that the Christian Reformed Church was slow in taking up mission responsibilities seemed to weigh heavily upon its leaders, and complaints on this score were frequently made.[5] Some difficulty in applying traditional Reformed conceptions to the field of evangelization is reflected in an article, "Must Gospel Preaching be Objective or Subjective?"[6] Another article deplored the scanty attention paid to missions in the Reformed confessional standards.[7]

Some outlet for mission sentiment was found in contributions to mission work conducted by the parent church in the Netherlands. A contribution of $2,000.00 was made to that cause in 1881,[8] and another of $1,180.00 in 1883.[9] A substantial measure of support was also given

1. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (May 9, 1947), p. 583.
2. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (June 7, 1946), p. 711.
3. Synodical Minutes Christian Reformed Church 1857-1880, p. 26, Art. 3.
4. De Wachter, Vol. XI, no. 10 (August 1, 1878), p. 2.
5. Ibid., no. 4 (May 9, 1878), p. 1.
   De Wachter, Vol. XIII, no. 31 (December 16, 1880), p. 3.
6. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. III (August, 1899), pp. 331-335.
7. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XI (February, 1907)), pp. 68 ff.
8. De Wachter, Vol. XIV, no. 19 (July 28, 1881), p. 3.
9. De Wachter, Vol. XVI, no. 20 (August 2, 1883), p. 3.

to United Presbyterian foreign missions.[10] The conviction was felt, however, that the Christian Reformed Church ought to support her own missions.[11] When the Dutch churches proposed to build a hospital in Java, the mailing address for donations was published, but readers were reminded that their first responsibility was for their own missions.[12]

The first type of mission activity to be undertaken was the work of home missions. This work was distinctly a means of self-preservation and expansion of the Christian Reformed Church. The home missionary was called upon to seek out the scattered communities of Dutchmen and establish churches among them. The first home missionary was also called upon occasionally to restore order when a congregation and minister were at odds with each other.[13] Another part of his duties was to supply small and financially weak congregations with preaching services at least for a few weeks during the year.[14] By 1891 the church was accustomed to having two home missionaries in the field, and the theological students were helping in this work during their summer vacations. Mission work was done not only where small churches existed, or where they had yet to be organized, but also:

> In places where people live who were formerly more or less religious, but through loss of that characteristic have isolated themselves and their children seem to revert to heathenism.[15]

This last provision is as close an approximation of frontier revivals as can be found in Christian Reformed history.

Much of this same conception of the task of home missions has remained to the present. As long as immigration continued, the home missionary had a ready field in the care of the immigrants. The westward trend in America in past years, and the trend from urban to suburban areas in recent years, have perpetuated this type of task. A revival of this original home mission task is under way in the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, where a considerable immigration from Holland is now in progress.[16]

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10. From May 1, 1895 to March 18, 1896, $806.52 for this cause. Cf. De Wachter, Vol. XXX, no. 4 (March 18, 1896), p. 1.
11. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. III (November, 1899), pp. 445 ff.
12. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (April, 1897), p. 106.
13. Synodical Minutes Christian Reformed Church 1857-1880, p. 198.
14. De Wachter, Vol. XVI, no. 5 (April 12, 1883), p. 2.
15. De Wachter, Vol. XXIV, no. 18 (June 17, 1891), p. 1.
16. Acts of Synod, 1947, pp. 64, 200 ff.
There are fourteen Christian Reformed congregations in Canada, all under the American Synod. Each is associated with the nearest American Classis.

The "Home Mission Order" adopted in 1936 describes the task of home missions as follows:

> The scope of Home Missions includes the following: the bringing of the Gospel to the dispersed brethren of the faith, as well as to the unchurched, by missionaries of the Church, with a view to Church Extension; the strengthening of the fields which may be said to be in an emergency state through the stationing of candidates for the ministry in them; and the subsidizing of needy congregations, which without such aid would not be able to maintain the Gospel Ministry in their midst.[17]

The work as thus conceived has grown until at present there are eleven home missionaries in various fields, including the "home-missionary-at-large," an office created by the Home Mission Order adopted in 1936.[18]

With the cessation of immigration and the breakdown of Christian Reformed isolation, a new sense of responsibility to the American church world has gradually come to the fore. In a recent article on "Evangelism," the home missionary speaks as follows:

> The traditional conception of home mission work limits the sphere to the scattered brethren of the faith. In the formative period our Church gave them sole attention. The urge to gather those of Reformed faith into the bosom of the Church was predominant. The attempts to reach the unchurched were feeble.
>
> . . . . We take pride in our adherence to the Truth. We know the world's need. We have the everlasting Gospel. Ours is a great privilege and a compelling opportunity. Why should we delay rising to the occasion?[19]

That phase of home mission activity has been receiving increasing emphasis since 1930, when the Synod received a report advocating the discharge of responsibilities over against the apostate churches in America.[20] Several factors have played their part in this increase in interest in the unchurched. Prominent and perhaps basic among them is the decline in isolation, which brought a greater awareness of the environment as a challenge rather than a threat. To quote just one representative utterance, the home missionary said in 1946, "We have come to a measure of maturity. The shell of isolation is broken. Now the passion to bring the Gospel should be overwhelming."[21] This factor must have been operative already in 1930, when the committee to study home mission matters was appointed. Another factor which

17. Home Mission Order. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1936, p. 190.
18. Cf. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1947, pp. 7-53.
19. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (April 12, 1946), p. 460.
20. "In view of this situation, the Church of God, our own included, should address itself to the task of Evangelism, that is, missions among apostates, in a manner corresponding to the gravity of prevailing religious conditions."
The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (March 29, 1946), p. 396.
21. Ibid. (April 12, 1946), p. 460.

increased the concern with the unchurched was the economic depression of the "thirties" and the resulting "oversupply" of ministerial candidates. To handle this problem, the Synod appointed an "Emergency Committee for Fields, Workers, and Funds," in whose very mandate the unchurched were considered.[22] Two years later the committee could report that among the fields aided by its efforts there were two with no Christian Reformed nucleus whatsoever.[23] It was concluded that God had thus forced the church to expand its field and improve its methods.[24] A third factor is mentioned in a recent report, which stresses the contact which the younger members of the church had with the American world as servicemen. This is viewed as one of the principal reasons for a great interest in Kingdom work, typified by a large Pre-Seminary enrollment at Calvin College.[25]

Progress along this line has not been rapid, and perhaps may not even be described as steady. The advent of the war, calling for chaplains and service pastors, resulted in a drain of manpower which crippled the program. But even aside from that consideration, enthusiasm seems to have waned somewhat. One writer complains that many valuable synodical reports and decisions lie buried in the official records and are forgotten by the people.[26] But official efforts to improve and expand this program are again under way. The Synod of 1947 adopted a "United Home Missionary Service," whose objectives it summarized under the motto, "Every member a missionary." It is frankly aimed at making the influence of the Christian Reformed Church felt among the unchurched and apostate in America. The language of the resolution consistently reflects the conviction that the very existence of the church depends upon devotion to this task.[27]

The task of adapting Christian Reformed home missions to people without a Dutch background has not been easy. The standards of

22. "Immigration has for the time being at least, well nigh ceased. We are sufficiently Americanized to meet our American neighbors freely. We have a glorious conception of life and confession of faith. True, our distinctiveness is, as far as many are concerned, against us. Yet your Committee believes that if we will only be as broad and sympathetic as our Confession demands, and if we will practise the Biblical methods of approach and presentation as to the Gospel message, and if we at the same time will dare to be just as distinctive as the Word of God and our Reformed position makes us, then we shall meet with response."
Acts of Synod, 1932, p. 173.
23. Acts of Synod, 1934, p. 214.
24. Ibid., p. 218.
25. Acts of Synod, 1947, p. 157.
26. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (March 29, 1946), p. 396.
27. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1947, pp. 59, 156 f.

admission to Christian Reformed membership require a considerable knowledge of Reformed doctrine. Besides this, Christian Reformed churches have never been community churches in the full sense of the term. They have drawn their membership from Dutch people of communities as far as twenty-five miles from the church. A mission convert does not easily mingle with the members of a church so constituted. Thus past isolation tends to make this influence on the environment more difficult. Barring a new influx of Dutch immigrants, however, the future of Christian Reformed home missions depends on the solution of these problems.

The existence of this problem was recognized in two overtures received by the Synod of 1947. Both overtures sought to avoid the necessity of requiring mission converts to affiliate with some Christian Reformed congregation, although they differed in the alternatives to this practice which they advised. The response of Synod was to remind the churches "that in cases where it is not feasible to have the converts leave the mission and attend the nearest church, the advisability of establishing a branch church at such mission stations be considered in order that the converts continue to attend the mission where they were converted and the sacraments may be administered there."[28] The question whether or not to accommodate the Christian Reformed standards to the mission convert's needs is thus answered by a sort of compromise. The basic question is answered neither affirmatively nor negatively. It remains to be seen whether the practical consequences of this position will prove to be satisfactory. Cultural isolation and influence on the environment are opposed to each other, as is quite clearly evidenced in this situation. Unless some sort of harmony can be achieved between the two, a clear-cut choice in favor of one or the other must soon be made.

The beginnings of heathen mission work in the Christian Reformed Church concerned the American Indians of the West. The Synod of 1888 appointed a committee to investigate the possibilities of this work.[29] The decision to work among the Indians was reiterated in 1894.[30] The committee appointed in 1888 was pleased to learn that one of its own members was ready to volunteer for work among the

28. Ibid., p. 46.
29. Acts of Synod, 1888, pp. 14, 38 f.
30. Acts of Synod, 1894, p. 74.

Indians. He was appointed in October, 1889, and began work among the Indians near Rosebud, South Dakota.[31] Unfortunately, he proved unequal to this task. He recognized his own inability, and asked to be sent to work among the negroes in the South.[32] Less than a year after his installation, he was released from his task.[33]

The Synod continued to focus its interest upon the Indians. The church was cautioned to investigate the field carefully before any further work was attempted.[34] In 1896 an investigating committee recommended Gallup, New Mexico, as the best site for work among the Indians, with the Navaho tribe as the subjects of the work.[35] On September 30, 1896, the Rev. and Mrs. H. Fryling and Mr. and Mrs. A. Vander Wagen were commissioned for this work.[36] The work thus begun proved difficult, but a slow advance was made in it. By 1897, gospel preaching, Sunday school, and catechetical work had been begun among the Navaho and some small beginnings of work among the Zuni tribe to the south had been made.[37]

At present, the Christian Reformed Church has fifteen mission stations among the Navaho and Zuni Indians, with nine ordained workers and forty lay workers. Rehoboth, New Mexico, has a grade school, high school, and hospital, and another grade school is operated at Zuni, New Mexico.[38] Several of the lay workers are converts. Some of the stations are organized Christian Reformed congregations, to which most of the converts belong.[39]

It is interesting to note the extent of the doctrinal training which the Christian Reformed Church seeks to give its mission subjects. The Secretary of Missions writes:

> The adult Indians who come in touch with the gospel for the first time after they have reached maturity are given some training in doctrine before they are baptized and some training afterwards, but the amount

31. De Wachter, Vol. XXII, no. 34 (October 30, 1889), p. 1.
32. H. Beets, Toiling and Trusting 50 Years of Christian Reformed Missions (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids Printing Co., 1940), p. 29.
33. September, 1890. Cf. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. III (November, 1899), p. 448.
34. De Wachter, Vol. XXV, no. 9 (April 27, 1892), p. 2.
35. De Wachter, Vol. XXIX, no. 29 (September 9, 1896), p. 2.
36. Ibid., no. 33 (October 7, 1896), p. 1.
37. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. I (March, 1897), pp. 73 ff.
38. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1947, pp. 148 ff.
39. E.g. Crown Point, Rehoboth, and Tohatchi, New Mexico. Ibid., p. 7.

> of it and the depth of it is necessarily limited by the time the missionary can spend with them and by their own grasp of vital truth . . .
>
> The children in our mission schools, both at Zuni and Rehoboth, receive a very thorough training in doctrine. I have been amazed at the progress those children make. They have catechism lessons, first in Bible history, later in doctrine, while they are at school. The matrons of the school drill them in their work before they attend the catechism class taught by the pastor. When I taught that class for a few months several years ago, I was convinced that they were learning their catechism lessons better than the average covenant child in our churches. Of course, most of the children leave school before they are fifteen. A change will be brought about now that a complete high school has been authorized at Rehoboth.
>
> Those pupils, and thus far there are only a few of them, who are being trained for evangelistic work among their own people, receive as thorough a training in doctrine as the pupils in our own Christian high schools receive. I would not say they are able to grasp it as well, for most of them have not had a background of Christian teaching, but they are taught it and some do respond beautifully.[40]

It is thus evident that the Christian Reformed emphasis upon education is carried to a great extent to the mission field.

The work among the Indians has been attended by persistent difficulties and frequent disappointments. Dissatisfaction with the results has occasionally been expressed.[41] But the work has progressed steadily, despite the difficulties. The fiftieth anniversary of the Indian mission work was celebrated October 10-12, 1946.[42]

By 1918, a desire for a new mission field was felt by a number of churches. Taking cognizance of the financial prosperity of the church and the willingness of several young ministers to be sent abroad, the Synod decided to open a new field. Two ministers were appointed to investigate the possibilities of work in Central Africa and China.[43] The following Synod chose China rather than the Sudan as the new mission field, giving the following reasons:

a) The rich language and literature of China.
b) The healthful climate.
c) The fairly good facilities for transportation and communication.
d) The strategic significance of the Chinese land and people.
e) The opportunity for education of the children of missionaries.
f) The conservative, intellectual spirit of the Chinese people harmonizes better with the character of our people than the emotional nature of the African natives.[44]

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40. Personal letter from Dr. J. C. De Korne, December 10, 1947.
41. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1945, pp. 205-209.
42. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (November 1, 1946), p. 1268. Cf. also the semi-centennial volume, Navaho and Zuni for Christ (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Board of Missions, 1947).
43. Acts of Synod, 1918, pp. 84 f.
44. Acts of Synod, 1920, p. 50.

The provinces of Fukien and Honan were given the preference, and the missionaries were instructed to work in co-operation with some church of Reformed persuasion during the first few years.[45] The first three missionaries arrived in China to begin their work on November 23, 1920.[46] The next Synod chose North Kiangsu Province as the specific field of labor, authorized the purchase of land for a mission compound, and directed that emphasis be laid on evangelistic work.[47]

The work has progressed encouragingly, despite interruption in 1926 and during the Japanese occupation of World War II. Dr. L. S. Huizenga, one of the pioneer missionaries, died a martyr during that occupation, on July 16, 1945.[48] The missionaries who were evacuated are now returning as rapidly as conditions permit. The Christian Reformed Church now supports five ordained ministers, two doctors, and four lay workers in the Chinese field.[49]

The Christian Reformed Church undertook mission work in South America under unusual circumstances. There had been a considerable emigration of Dutchmen to Argentina, particularly during the years 1889 to 1891.[50] Some of these settlers organized Reformed churches. In 1898 they requested the Christian Reformed Synod for supervision and assistance, a request which was partially granted.[51] The Synod of 1904 received the further information that there were in Argentina two congregations, calling themselves Christian Reformed, which desired union with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Besides those congregations, there were numerous Dutchmen elsewhere who provided a fertile field for organizational work. The Synod decided to send one of its ministers to investigate the situation.[52] The work was viewed as a home mission matter, probably because it involved scattered Dutchmen rather than unevangelized heathen.

Following a visit by Dr. J. Van Lonkhuyzen in 1908,[53] the Synod decided to support the South American churches financially.[54] This type

45. Ibid., pp. 50 f.
46. Beets, Toiling and Trusting, p. 225.
47. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1922, pp. 35-37, 195.
48. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 299.
49. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1947, p. 149.
50. Beets, Toiling and Trusting, p. 225.
51. Acts of Synod, 1898, pp. 54 f.
52. Acts of Synod, 1904, p. 20.
53. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1908, pp. 51 f.
54. Ibid., p. 27.

of support was continued until 1930. In that year the Christian Reformed Church sent a minister to South America as a "loan" to the Churches there.[55] By that time, the South American churches were organized as Classis Buenos Aires of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. In 1934, the general Synod in the Netherlands proposed transfer of the Classis to the Christian Reformed Church in America, but this matter was tabled.[56] At present, the Christian Reformed Church supports three ministers, four congregations, and one mission station, in Argentina and Brazil.[57] Although the Dutch settlers continue to constitute the nucleus of the work, the increasing orientation of the people is opening ever larger possibilities of work among the Spanish and Portuguese population.[58]

Within the past decade, the Christian Reformed Church has also undertaken mission work on the African continent. From 1921 to 1933, Miss Johanna Veenstra, a member of the Christian Reformed Church, labored at Lupwe, in Nigeria, under the Sudan United Mission.[59] She aroused considerable interest and sympathy for the African work among Christian Reformed people. In 1938 there were three members of the Christian Reformed Church laboring in that field.[60] Noting the large measure of Christian Reformed interest in this field, the Synod of 1939 authorized the Foreign Mission Board to take over the Lupwe-Takum field from the Sudan United Mission.[61] Two ordained missionaries are now in the field and two others are under appointment, to take up their work as soon as their preparation is completed.[62]

Besides the mission work already discussed, the Christian Reformed Church maintains two Jewish mission institutions and numerous city missions. The work among the Jews is centered in the Paterson Hebrew Mission and the Nathanael Institute in Chicago. This work occupies two ordained ministers and six lay workers. Medical service is supplied through each of the institutions named.[63] These institutions are operated under the supervision of the classes in which they are located, and make annual reports to Synod. Another institution which deserves

55. Acts of Synod, 1930, p. 291.
56. Acts of Synod, 1934, pp. 54, 256.
57. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1947, p. 150.
58. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 245.
59. Beets, Toiling and Trusting, pp. 278-280.
60. Acts of Synod, 1938, p. 257.
61. Acts of Synod, 1939, p. 89.
62. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1947, p. 149.
63. Ibid.

special mention is the Holland Seamen's Home and Immigration Bureau, located in Hoboken, New Jersey.

The city mission work is largely a matter of local initiative. There are at least forty-five centers of local activity, involving full time or part time workers. Outstanding institutions of this sort are the Chicago Helping Hand Mission, the West Fulton Mission in Grand Rapids, and the Northside Gospel Mission in Paterson, New Jersey.[64]

General interest of the Christian Reformed people in mission causes is fostered by mission festivals and Women's Missionary Unions. The first Christian Reformed mission festival held in Grand Rapids was on July 4, 1913.[65] These gatherings remain an annual event for many Christian Reformed communities. Often they are held on Independence Day, thus combining a patriotic observance with a religious purpose. The Women's Missionary Unions date their organization from 1925.[66] Their meetings are devoted to dispensing missionary information and raising funds for mission causes.

True to its orthodoxy, the Christian Reformed Church has consistently maintained that all medical and educational work on the mission field must be subordinated to the main purpose of spreading the Gospel. The Synod of 1936 adopted this declaration:

> The Board reiterates, and that most emphatically, that our Church adheres to the principle that *the evangelizing of the nations is the work of the Church,* and that the medical and educational and all other missionary activities are merely helps to attain that end. Consequently there must be on the part of those entrusted with the task of supervising our missions an unabated vigilance that the medical and educational or any other work shall never outstrip the evangelical and become an end in itself.[67]

In 1945 a serious criticism of the work on the Indian mission field concerned alleged departures from this policy:

> The report . . . lays great stress on the so-called "broader view" of missions in contrast to what it calls the "narrow view" aiming "only at so-called evangelization." In this "broader view" there is serious confusion of thinking, as it seeks to establish the Kingdom of God in all its manifestations among the heathen. There is no differentiation between the work of the Church within its own fold and outside its fold.[68]

The Synod of 1945 found this charge so weighty that it appointed a

64. Ibid., pp. 150-153.
65. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XVII (July, 1913), p. 323.
66. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church (1946 edition), pp. 167 f.
67. Acts of Synod, 1936, p. 130.
68. Acts of Synod, 1945, p. 206.

committee to study the matter and report later. Full details of this report and action taken upon it are not yet available.[69]

The Christian Reformed Church has experienced some difficulty in finding the proper place which its boards should occupy. The Church Order provides that the mission work of the Church be regulated by a Mission Order adopted by the general synod.[70] In the regulation of Christian Reformed heathen missions, an attempt was made to abide by two principles: that the work should, if possible, proceed from the local consistory, and that there was no room for autonomous boards for church work within the provisions of Reformed church order. One commentator objected strenuously to provisions in the Mission Order of 1892 which seemed to depart from these principles:

> At Classis, at Synod, in the spheres of doctrine, discipline, and worship, in the field of missions, it is and remains at all times the consistory which is empowered to act as organ and representative of the Congregation of Christ. Reformed church order knows of no standing committees. What a Reformed church needs is delegates with power to act in matters which the ecclesiastical gatherings cannot well manage. . . . Delegates who carry out the instructions given them by God's church, and who report the results of their work again in the congregation of God. . . . That the Church surrenders her rights and powers to the Committee for Home Missions is clearly seen in the proposed order.[71]

The writer objected especially to the provision that the committee be given the power to call missionaries.

In the same spirit, the Synod of 1906 was requested to devise a mission order which "adheres to God's Word and the principles laid down in it, and abides by the peculiarities of our church life and the characteristics of our mission field."[72] The same Synod was asked to decide the question "whether the calling of missionary ministers of the Word may also proceed from Classis and Synod."[73] It was decided in 1908 that classes and synods not only might, but ought to call missionaries,[74] to which decision a protest was immediately made on the grounds that each minister ought to be under the supervision of a consistory.[75] The Synod of 1910 made the concession to this position

69. Ibid., p. 42
70. Church Order, Art. 51. Cf. Schaver, op. cit., p. 50.
71. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. II (March, 1898), pp. 49 f.
72. Acts of Synod, 1906, p. 44.
73. Ibid., p. 42.
74. Acts of Synod, 1908, p. 18.
75. Ibid., p. 19.

that the calling of missionaries, both to home and foreign fields, should take place through a local church designated by the synod.[76]

In Home Missions, the attempt was made to have the work regulated by local consistories, with advice from members of a mission board. It was discovered, however, that the greater experience of the board members gave their advice such weight that this provision amounted to board control. A committee appointed to revise the Home Mission Order sought in 1928 to bring home missions under classical control:

> Finally we wish to make a general remark regarding the ideal that some enthusiasts for the new plan quite plainly have in mind. They want a General Home Mission Committee similar to the Foreign Mission Board. We believe this is a fundamentally wrong plan from the viewpoint of Reformed church polity.
>
> The work of Foreign Missions is, from the very nature of the case, a task of the whole Church, since the field of labor does not lie within the territory of any particular congregation or classis. But this is not the case with the Home Mission work.[77]

Eventually the work was placed in the hands of a general committee for the whole church. The Home Mission Order adopted in 1936 contains the following statements:

> Whereas it is in the interest of unity and co-operation that all Home Mission activity be considered the task of the Church as a whole, this Home Mission Order proceeds upon the assumption that Synod shall conduct and supervise the work in as far as it cannot do so directly, through its agencies.
>
> The Home-missionary-at-large and all home missionaries in the service of the Church shall be designated for their respective tasks and fields by Synod. The Executive Committee shall present nominations, subject to the approval of Synod, from which Synod shall proceed to select. If circumstances demand that a call be extended when Synod is not in session, the Executive Committee shall make a selection.
>
> For the actual calling of designated men, Synod shall request a Consistory of its own choice. For cases between the gatherings of Synod, the Executive Committee shall be empowered to request a Consistory to issue a call in the name of Synod.
>
> Installation or ordination of home missionaries takes place in the midst of the calling church, with which church also the missionary remains officially connected as a minister of the gospel.[78]

This is a clear recognition of the superior ability of boards to deal with mission problems. The Synod conducts the missions, but it does so through the agency of its board. The provision for a call to a missionary by a local church is little more than lip service to the idea that the work ought to proceed from the local consistory if possible. A

76. Acts of Synod, 1910, p. 30.
77. Acts of Synod, 1928, pp. 103 f.
78. Acts of Synod, 1936, pp. 190-194.

final concession to this superior ability on the part of the boards came in 1944, when calling churches were instructed merely to issue a call to a certain field, e.g. the foreign or domestic field, leaving the designation of a post for the particular missionary concerned to the discretion of the board.[79] At the same time, the Synods have watched the boards with an almost jealous scrutiny, lest they appropriate too much power to themselves.

What this mission program means in terms of cost to the individual family can be seen from the following figures. In 1945, the receipts of the various mission causes were as follows:

Heathen missions		$282,656.29
Home missions		158,664.65
Jewish missions		22,504.94
South America	(approx.)	9,000.00
Seamen's Home		19,171.83[80]
Total		$491,997.71

When divided equally among the 29,315 church families listed in 1945[81] this sum represents a contribution of $16.78 per family. The relatively small cost of city mission work, largely done by volunteers, is not included in the above sum. Thus it will be seen that the occasional complaint of a lack of missionary zeal on the part of the Christian Reformed Church is not wholly justified. This mission program is an important part of the effort of that church to influence its environment. It has provided an outlet for the energies of the church which has undoubtedly helped to preserve its orthodoxy. Appreciation of the doctrinal position seems to grow in direct proportion to the efforts to propagate it.

Another type of influence on the environment is exercised more or less directly by the publications of the Christian Reformed Church. The two official church organs are *De Wachter* and *The Banner*. *De Wachter* first appeared on February 14, 1868, with the Rev. D. J. Van der Werp as editor.[82] It was at first a semi-monthly, becoming a weekly in 1880. Various ministers and theological professors have held the editorship in addition to their regular labors. The present editor is an emeritus minister. Among the Christian Reformed members who can

79. Acts of Synod, 1944, pp. 64-66.
80. Acts of Synod, 1945, pp. 42, 283, 338, 219, 242, 174.
81. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1945, p. 26.
82. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church (1923 edition), p. 67.

read Dutch, *De Wachter* is still widely read, and highly prized by some. Its circulation in 1944 was 5,600.[83]

The Banner was first published in 1866 as a 16 page monthly, called *The Banner of Truth.*[84] At that time it was the official organ of the True Protestant Reformed Dutch Church. The Christian Reformed Church purchased it in 1914.[85] The editorship of this paper also was a part time task of various ministers until 1944, when the present editor in chief was appointed to a full time position.[86] The circulation has grown from 3,275 in 1917[87] to 30,000 in 1947.[88]

The influence of these official publications on the environment is indirect. They seek to keep Christian Reformed readers informed of significant events in the ecclesiastical and secular environments, and to mould their opinions. Outstanding in this respect are two pages appearing weekly in *The Banner* under the headings, "The World Today" and "Other Churches in the News." The publications reflect the reaction of the Christian Reformed Church to environmental influences, particularly on the editorial pages and in the column, "Trends in Religious Thought." Other attempts to influence the environment are warmly championed by these papers, particularly in the weekly column, "Missions at Home and Abroad," and in the frequent articles on radio broadcasting.

Several other periodicals, although not owned by the Christian Reformed Church, are published and edited under Christian Reformed auspices. Those mentioned may be said to have denomination-wide coverage. *De Heidenwereld,* a missionary magazine, appeared in 1897, edited jointly by Reformed and Christian Reformed men.[89] Its successor, *The Missionary Monthly,* represents the same brand of cooperation.[90] It numbers readers in the Reformed Church as well as the Christian Reformed.

The Federation Messenger, dating from 1928, is the official organ of the National Federation of Reformed Men's Societies. It is largely

83. Acts of Synod, 1945, p. 238.
84. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church, 1923 edition, p. 99.
85. Ibid.
86. Acts of Synod, 1944, p. 20.
87. The earliest figure available. Acts of Synod, 1918, p. 129.
88. Letter from Mr. J. J. Buiten, Business Manager of The Banner, Dec. 4, 1947.
89. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church (1923 edition), p. 85.
90. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1947, p. 237.

devoted to Bible lessons and discussion topics, and most of its readers are drawn from the Christian Reformed Church. *The Young Calvinist* is published by the American Federation of Reformed Young Men's Societies and the American Federation of Reformed Young Women's Societies. Since their membership is drawn from both Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches (but predominantly from the latter), the subscription list of this magazine also covers both denominations. This magazine gained some circulation outside of those circles as an indirect result of free distribution to all Christian Reformed servicemen during World War II. It has been published since 1920.

The Calvin Forum has been published since 1935 by members of the faculties of Calvin College and Seminary. It specializes in articles on scholarly subjects, viewed from a Calvinistic standpoint. Members of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church in America, the Hungarian Reformed Church, and other denominations are frequent contributors. Of all the periodicals mentioned, this monthly makes the most deliberate effort to influence the reading public outside as well as within the Christian Reformed Church.

De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, published from 1897 to 1917, and *The Christian Home and School Magazine* have already been mentioned. Among other periodicals which appeared for a time but which have ceased publication are *The Witness,* begun in 1921, and *Religion and Culture,* which was begun in 1918.[91] Various other publications are of a local nature.[92] While all of the publications mentioned reach a public which is largely composed of Christian Reformed people, they afford an outlet for Calvinistic views as interpreted by the Christian Reformed Church and give some publicity to those views outside the circles of that church.

A more deliberate effort to reach the general public is made in the publication of informative booklets and tracts. The Synod of 1944 authorized the publication of a series of pamphlets and booklets outlining the distinctive views of the Reformed faith and giving publicity to the Christian Reformed Church.[93] Such booklets were requested

91. Ibid., pp. 99 f.
92. E.g. The Pilot, The Chicago Calvinist, The Christian Indian, The Canadian Calvinist, Juventad Calvinista.
93. Acts of Synod, 1944, p. 70.

with a view to the instruction of those who entered the Christian Reformed Church as adults through marriage or through mission work.[94] Work has progressed on these booklets, but they have not yet been published. Another committee was appointed in 1945 to carry the work of tract evangelism farther.[95] This committee in 1946 recommended three types of tracts; for the home church, for the more intellectual type of mission subject, and for the "down and out" type of mission subject.[96] This cause was recommended to the Christian Reformed churches for financial support.[97] The committee, which had been temporary, was made permanent, with the task of producing and distributing the tracts.[98] A further aid to those engaged in evangelization work was published in a booklet on "Home Evangelization."[99]

The work of the Christian Reformed Church in distributing Christian literature also includes co-operation with broader organizations. The American Bible Society has received the moral and financial support of the church since 1908.[100] A member was named to its advisory council in 1920.[101] The representative appointed labored diligently to increase Christian Reformed support of this organization.[102] Since 1939 the British and Foreign Bible Society has also been granted financial support, because of the existence of Christian Reformed churches in Canada.[103] The American Tract Society has also received support since 1908.[104] The Chicago Tract Society was added to the list of recommended causes in 1924,[105] and the Faith, Prayer, and Tract League in 1926.[106] It was also decided, in 1928, to grant financial support to the Gideons.[107] When it was reported, however, that the Gideons were engaging in evangelistic work, the Synod of 1945 specified that moral and financial support should be granted to the Gideons only for the distribution of Bibles and Testaments.[108]

94. Ibid., p. 69.
95. Acts of Synod, 1945, p. 59.
96. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 211.
97. Ibid., p. 99.
98. Ibid., p. 86.
99. Acts of Synod, 1943, p. 29.
100. Acts of Synod, 1908, p. 43.
101. Acts of Synod, 1920, pp. 87 f.
102. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1922, p. 237; 1926, p. 303; 1928, p. 275.
103. Acts of Synod, 1939, pp. 58 f.
104. Acts of Synod, 1908, p. 43.
105. Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 39.
106. Acts of Synod, 1926, p. 44.
107. Acts of Synod, 1928, p. 123.
108. Acts of Synod, 1945, p. 110.

Financial support for the above-named causes is provided through free-will offerings received in the various Christian Reformed congregations throughout the year.

The denomination as a whole is also engaged in a deliberate effort to influence the environment through the medium of radio. In the report which introduced the proposal of a denominational radio program, the assistance which radio would give in mission work was stressed:

> The radio will not only afford us an opportunity to bring a message and open the door to our missionaries; but it will also provide us with an index as to the number and location of the listeners who are interested in our message and are disposed to receive men into their homes.[109]

A certain definite class of people was envisaged as the audience:

> We believe that our Church is eminently fitted and equipped for work among the upper class in our nation and therefore faces a challenge as never before to bring it the words of life. Our emphasis on sound biblical preaching by an educated ministry should be a powerful asset in seeking to touch this forgotten class.[110]

By 1939 the program was begun, broadcasting over several stations through the use of electrical transcriptions.[111] The work of delivering the addresses was divided among several speakers, since Synod did not feel ready to appoint any man to this position on a full time basis.[112] The work of the new program, called the "Back to God Hour," was recommended to the churches for financial support.[113]

This denominational radio work has progressed steadily to the present, and the response which it has elicited has been excellent. In 1946 a full-time speaker was engaged.[114] His work was not only to provide an integrated series of messages, but to bring further organization into the work and to arouse new and greater interest among the Christian Reformed people.

During most of 1947, the half-hour program was broadcast over thirty stations in the United States, Canada, and Hawaii.[115] Transcriptions were used to distribute the program to these stations. Listeners were invited to write to the radio minister for help in their problems or for printed copies of the addresses. In many localities,

109. Acts of Synod, 1938, p. 203.
110. Ibid., p. 202.
111. Acts of Synod, 1940, p. 331.
112. Ibid., p. 61.
113. Ibid., p. 110.
114. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 82.
115. Cf. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (May 9, 1947), p. 598.

"spot" announcements during the "station break" after the program were used to advertise local Christian Reformed Churches. Reliable estimates placed the weekly listening audience at between 300,000 and 500,000. A large percentage of the mail received is from listeners who are not members of the Christian Reformed Church.[116] The program has more of an apologetic tone than the usual evangelistic broadcast. No appeal is made for contributions. The financial burdens of the broadcast are borne principally through a denominational assessment.[117] During the latter part of 1947 the Mutual Broadcasting System offered to open time on its network for this program. Since acceptance of this offer would vastly increase the cost of the program, far beyond the budget for 1948, the question of increased support was placed before the various congregations of the Christian Reformed Church. The response was overwhelmingly favorable. On the strength of these promises of additional support, the offer was accepted. The "Back to God Hour" began broadcasts over the Mutual network on December 7, 1947.[118] Thus the program is now a "live" broadcast, and the coverage is greatly increased.

Other broadcasts on a smaller scale are supported by local initiative. Some such broadcasts were carried on before the "Back to God Hour" was originated.[119] The "Radio Log" printed in *The Banner* lists thirteen such broadcasts besides the "Back to God Hour." Most of these are half-hour broadcasts on Sunday. One is a fifteen-minute program broadcast Monday through Friday. Several are broadcasts of Christian Reformed worship services. Some programs are supported by individual congregations, some by groups of congregations, and the remainder by one or more classes.[120]

It should be noted that both in the publication of tracts and the sponsoring of radio broadcasts, Christian Reformed interest in the environment has increased greatly during recent years. To some extent this reflects the increased consciousness of the environment since the loss of language isolation. It may be said that the attitude to the increasing contact with the environment was at first defensive, e.g. in

116. 1941 — 44% from "outsiders." 1942, 40%; 1943, 59%; 1944, 80%; Cf. Acts of Synod, 1945, p. 262.
117. $2.50 per family in 1947. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 124.
118. Cf. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (December 26, 1947), pp. 1445, 1460, 1470.
119. Beets. The Christian Reformed Church (1946 edition) p. 150.
120. Cf. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (May 30, 1947), p. 685.

the heresy trials of 1918-1936 and the declaration on worldly amusements of 1928. It is now becoming more aggressive, with a sense of responsibility toward the American world frequently expressed. Whether this new aggressive spirit will serve adequately to take the place of language isolation as a guardian of Christian Reformed orthodoxy can not yet be clearly determined.

We may now note the manifestations of social concern in the Christian Reformed Church. Like the Christian schools, hospitals and other benevolent institutions are considered the concern of Christian people rather than of the institutional church. Three such institutions, however, maintain such close relations with the Christian Reformed Church that they merit mention here. The Christian Psychopathic Hospital at Cutlerville, Michigan, is an institution for the care of mental patients. Besides the hospital, a rest home for border-line mental cases is operated. The medical staff and the association which owns and operates the hospital draw their membership largely from the Christian Reformed Church. The hospital pastor is a Christian Reformed minister. A similar institution is operated by the Christian Sanatorium Association of Wyckoff, New Jersey. The Bethesda Sanatorium in Denver, Colorado, is an institution for the care of tuberculosis patients. Members of the Reformed Church in America also co-operate in the support and management of these institutions.[121]

These institutions are annually recommended to the Christian Reformed Churches for financial support.[122] Dr. Beets contends that these institutions owe much to the influence of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, Sr., who "inspired multitudes to lay stress on certain things which had been more or less overlooked or neglected by the men of the Dutch Secession."[123] The dates of the organization of the groups supporting these institutions, 1910 to 1914, lend support to this contention.[124] Also the product of Reformed and Christian Reformed cooperation were four "Holland Homes for the Aged," opened between 1892 and 1914.[125]

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121. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1947, p. 154.

122. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 124.

123. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church (1946 edition), p. 89.

124. Cutlerville Psychopathic Hospital, 1910; Bethesda Sanatorium, 1914; Goffle Hill Sanatorium, 1911.
Ibid.

125. Ibid., pp. 88 f.

The Christian Reformed Church has also lent more or less active support to other attempts to influence the environment. Although it has never issued an outright condemnation of the drinking of alcoholic beverages, some support has been given to the temperance movement. The Synod of 1902 declared that saloon keeping was incompatible with membership in the Church of Christ, and that saloon keepers within the Church were to be disciplined. It further urged Christians to use their rights as citizens to combat the evils of strong drink.[126] Some objections were voiced to this decision, but they concerned the formal error of the establishment of rules without a clear declaration of the principles involved.[127]

The Synod of 1916 was addressed by a representative of the "Michigan Dry Campaign and Anti-Saloon League."[128] The same synod refused to "lay down rules for discipline in regard to those who in any way patronize them (the saloons)," because the recognized disciplinary procedure was considered sufficiently clear on this point. It did, however, officially recognize the saloon as an evil in social and political life, promise moral support to the organizations opposing the saloon, and urge the churches to fight the evil with all the means permitted by Scripture.[129]

Repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment brought renewed emphasis upon this position. The Synod of 1934 expressed itself as follows:

> The Synod . . . hereby utters a public testimony against the drink evil of our day; warns all members of the Church against the dangers and temptations necessarily attendant upon the legalized public sale and consumption of strong drink; and reminds the leaders of their responsibility to let the light of the Word of God shine also upon the sins and temptations associated with this modern evil.[130]

Various critics, however, have found something lacking in the attitude of the Christian Reformed Church to this evil. A recent writer summarized this criticism rather completely:

> The official stand of the Church is evidently sound in principle. But what are we doing to make this stand vocal in our world and even in our own limited circles? Are we ministers preaching much against this evil of drink? Are we as a Church trying in some effective manner really to fight this? . . . We have at some times been called a "wet" church. That designation is not altogether fair, but we ourselves are to blame for

126. Acts of Synod, 1902, p. 114.
127. Ibid., p. 58.
128. Acts of Synod, 1916, p. 12.
129. Ibid., p. 49.
130. Acts of Synod, 1934, pp. 77 f.

> being called that. As a body we have given no evidence that we are conscious of the seriousness of this great evil, and have done nothing in any concerted fashion on a somewhat broader scale to combat this terrible menace . . . We know that we are being criticized for this very thing, that we have warned strongly against theater attendance, card playing, and dancing, but have not given nearly so much attention to this veritable flood which threatens to drown our nation morally and spiritually.[131]

Another attempt to influence the environment concerns the observance of the Lord's Day. The attitude of the Christian Reformed Church to this day is that of the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619, adopted by the Christian Reformed Synod in 1881.[132] The position is summarized in six declarations:

> 1) There is in the fourth commandment of the divine law a ceremonial and an ethical element.
>
> 2) The ceremonial element is the rest of the seventh day after creation, and the strict observance of that day imposed especially on the Jewish people.
>
> 3) The ethical element consists in the fact that a certain definite day is set aside for worship and so much rest as is needful for worship and hallowed meditation.
>
> 4) The Sabbath of the Jews having been abolished, the day of the Lord must be solemnly hallowed by Christians.
>
> 5) Since the times of the apostles this day has always been observed by the old Catholic Church.
>
> 6) This day must be so consecrated to worship that on that day we rest from all servile works, except those which charity and present necessity require; and also from all such recreations as interfere with worship.[133]

The Synod of 1926 was addressed by a representative of the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States, whose object is "the preservation and extension of the first day of the week as a time set apart for rest, worship, religious education, and the service of God."[134] That Synod granted moral support to this organization and appointed a member to its advisory council.[135] Interest of this synod in the Lord's Day was undoubtedly heightened by a disciplinary case with which it had to deal. A certain Christian Reformed minister had been accused of departing from the official stand of the church in a sermon on the Sabbath, and had been deposed by his classis. The 1926 Synod found him to have departed from articles 1, 3, 4, and 6 of the adopted declaration and sustained the deposition.[136]

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131. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (December 20, 1946), p. 1498.
132. Acts of Synod, 1881, Art. 71.
133. Synod of Dort, 1618-1619, 164th session.
Cf. Schaver, op. cit., p. 33.
134. Acts of Synod, 1926, p. 12.
135. Ibid., pp. 73 f.
136. Ibid., pp. 185-194.

The Christian Reformed Church has continued to the present to retain its membership in the Lord's Day Alliance. In 1945 and 1946 it was reported to the synod that the Christian Reformed Church had contributed more than any other denomination to the support of this organization.[137] The contribution in 1945 was $4,535.51.[138]

The opposition of the Christian Reformed Church to secret societies was continued and extended through membership in the "National Christian Association." The Synod of 1898 was introduced to this organization through an address by one of its members.[139] The following synod appointed a representative to the annual convention of the organization.[140] Moral and financial support of this organization was recommended to the churches and has continued to the present. Influence of the Christian Reformed Church in this organization has become predominant. The present president and vice-president of the Association are Christian Reformed ministers, as is also the editor of the *Christian Cynosure,* its official publication. Two of the four lecturers offered by the organization are likewise Christian Reformed ministers.[141] In 1945 the Christian Reformed Church contributed $2,603.27 toward the organization's total receipts of $3,456.67.[142] The organization functions through publication of the *Christian Cynosure,* a 16 page monthly, the activities of a part-time field secretary and other lecturers, and the publication of tracts against secret societies.[143]

An important aspect of the social concern of the Christian Reformed Church is its attitude toward labor and unions. This matter was the subject of frequent discussions in the papers and decisions of synods. The first synodical mention of unions was highly unfavorable. The Synod of 1881, in answer to a specific question concerning membership in a working-men's union, decided that such unions were thoroughly un-Christian, and therefore ought to be warned against in the congregations. It is plain from the decision as rendered that unions were

137. Acts of Synod, 1945, p. 242; 1946, p. 429.
138. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 28.
139. The Association was organized in 1868 in Pittsburgh, Pa., and incorporated in 1874 in Illinois.
Cf. Acts of Synod, 1904, p. 24.
140. Acts of Synod, 1900, p. 49.
141. Cf. the Christian Cynosure, Vol. LXXX (August, 1947), p. 49.
142. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 27.
143. Ibid., pp. 374 ff.

suspected of being secret societies.[144] The Synod of 1883, however, refused to give a general rule with respect to unions, advising the individual consistories to pass judgment in specific cases.[145]

A similarly inconclusive attitude is reflected in *De Wachter,* of the same period. In 1882 a subscriber wrote to *De Wachter,* describing the formation of a union which held the threat of violence over the heads of the employers, and asking the opinion of the editor on membership in such a union. The answer was that membership in that kind of a union was not permissible to the Christian.[146] In 1885, however, *De Wachter* reprinted with approval an article from the *United Presbyterian,* in which syndicates of employers were attacked and labor unions were defended.[147]

Only once did the synod condemn a particular union by name. This was in 1886, when members of the Christian Reformed Church were warned against membership in the Knights of Labor. This condemnation was not on the mere grounds that the Knights of Labor were a union, but specifically that the organization was a secret, oath-bound society, to which, according to Christian Reformed standards, no Christian could belong.[148]

On other occasions, however, less official advice was sought with respect to particular unions. *De Wachter* in 1890 reported a free discussion of various unions at the synod of that year. Although no official decisions were made, the general attitude toward unions, and particularly toward the Patrons of Industry, was unfavorable.[149] This union was classed as a secret society. Although the *Acts* of the Synod of 1890 do not even mention the Patrons of Industry by name, nor any specific decision other than that to form a study committee, this report in *De Wachter* seems to have been considered by some as an official condemnation of that particular union. A few weeks after the report appeared, "the synodical decision with reference to the Patrons of Industry" was announced to the Christian Reformed congregation at Vogel Center, Michigan. The members of that union who were also

144. Acts of Synod, 1881, Art. 65.
145. Acts of Synod, 1885, p. 15.
146. De Wachter, Vol. XV, no. 22 (August 11, 1882), p. 2.
147. De Wachter, Vol. XVII, no. 47 (February 11, 1885), p. 2.
148. Acts of Synod, 1886, p. 32.
149. De Wachter, Vol. XXIII, no. 16 (June 18, 1890), p. 1.

members of the congregation objected both to the "decision" of Synod and to the hasty action of the consistory in applying it to them. Their protest was published in *De Wachter.*[150] *De Wachter* also reported a decision of Classis Grand Rapids West which criticized the Woodcarvers' Union, not merely because it was a union, but because of its socialistic principles.[151]

Sometimes the very idea of the organization of labor was criticized. *De Wachter* in 1888 reprinted an article from another paper, in which it was stated that strikes and the whole idea of labor organization were un-American.[152] In *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan,* unions were criticized for dealing in terms of might and convenience rather than justice and the law of God. The same article, however, although it stated that present unions were not all that they ought to be, recognized the need for organization in the oppression of the working classes.[153]

A different note was struck in an address before a union of Christian workers in Paterson, New Jersey, reprinted in *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan.* It was pointed out that, historically, the Church had taken the lead in emancipating those who were enslaved. The Church lost its leadership, however, at the time of the Renaissance. It now finds itself confronted with problems which it has neglected altogether too much. It has been neglectful in not outlining the principles of the Word for this sphere. That the workingman has come to a realization of his rights is true in spite of, not because of the attitude of the Church. The real solution of the problem of union membership for the Christian lies in the formation of Christian unions.[154] Thus the influence of the environment is seen in an awakening social consciousness on the part of the Christian Reformed Church; but the solution which is proposed is characteristic of that church in its distinctiveness.

Various synods were petitioned for specific condemnation or approbation of certain unions, or for a list of approved unions. Except in the case of the Knights of Labor this request was never granted. The Synod of 1904, however, adopted a highly significant statement with regard to

150. De Wachter, Vol. XXIII, no. 20 (July 23, 1890), p. 1.
151. De Wachter, Vol. XXXIII, no. 6 (March 28, 1900), p. 2.
152. De Wachter, Vol. XXI, no. 8 (April 25, 1888), p. 3.
153. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. VIII (Feb., 1904), pp. 74 ff.
154. Ibid., pp. 193 ff.

labor problems in general. We present a translation of the decision found in a later study of labor matters.[155]

> 1. (That) it may not be demanded of a Christian that he separate himself entirely from the communion with the world in natural life, though he should show himself to be controlled by a different principle in his speech and action;
>
> 2. that the Christian laborer may not be an idle spectator of all the evil and injustice that is found in the sphere of labor;
>
> 3. that he cannot accomplish anything alone, and should therefore unite with others, in order to reach the goal with united strength;
>
> 4. that under the present circumstances in the world of labor, organization is the duty of Christians in virtue of their office, and therefore as Christians they should seek to organize Christian Labor organizations;
>
> 5. that if any person should feel that Christian organization is neither desirable nor imperative, and should nevertheless want to join an organization of laborers, he should refrain from unions which,
>
> a) exact an oath or a pledge of unconditional submission to the majority of the ruling body, with disregard of one's duty toward God, the State, the Church, and the family;
>
> b) officially desecrate the Lord's day by holding business meetings, excursion trips, or doing aught else that is in conflict with the fourth commandment;
>
> c) maintain in their rules and regulations the right to appoint pickets or give permission to use force, or give occasion for the use of force by strikes, etc.;
>
> d) forbid a Christian to do what he as a Christian should do; or command him to do what he may not do;
>
> e) raise money in a manner condemned by the Word of God, e.g., dancing parties, card parties, Sunday excursions, etc.;
>
> f) have a religious ritual which is kept secret from all who are not members; and
>
> g) essentially are secret, oath-bound organizations.[156]

The consistories were instructed to adopt a cautious procedure with respect to union members, to educate them if possible, but to discipline them if necessary. Even "neutral and tolerable unions" were suspect, and members were to be advised to stay out of them as long as possible.[157]

Study committees reported on labor matters to the Synods of 1906, 1908, and 1914. The next significant decision, however, was not reached until 1916. The previous decision was revised, particularly with reference to unions whose constitutions were not plainly un-Christian. We present a translation of the decision:

> (We advise that) Synod provisionally change the decision of 1904 relative to the unions.

155. Acts of Synod, 1943, p. 384.
156. Acts of Synod, 1904, pp. 33-35.
157. Ibid., p. 36.

Grounds;

a) there are insufficient data to show that membership of the Church is inconsistent with membership in a so-called neutral union, unless it can be shown that a union according to its constitution leads into sin or sins, or in its continuous actions shows that it favors sins, because as long as there is no certainty in this matter it is not possible to maintain the position taken, and the present standing of members in the Church as "tolerable" is undesirable.

b) Since the two reports (majority and minority report rendered in 1914) reveal a great diversity of opinion, the committee further advises Synod to urge all the members of our churches, and particularly our leaders, to make more special study of this important point, in order that they may come under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to a greater unity of opinion.

c) With a view to the present situation, the following advice is given to our Christian laborers:

If one is compelled to belong to a so-called neutral union, in order to provide for oneself, then one should always, in his union and in the minds of his colaborers, witness strongly that he belongs to Jesus Christ and desires to seek His honor; and if one is hindered in this, he should break with such a union.

In places where independent Christian organizations are desirable, there should be an attempt to co-operate as much as possible with other unions, in order to obtain or retain right and justice.[158]

The Synod of 1928 added two important considerations to this discussion. It held Christian members of unions corporately responsible for any sinful actions of their unions unless they had done all in their power to combat those actions. Persistent refusal of a union to heed Christian objections obligates the Christian to withdraw from the union. The Synod also gave clear expression to the duty of the Church to exercise discipline upon those who are members of organizations essentially opposed to the Word of God, or who become party to sinful actions through their silence or consent.[159]

The relationship of the Church to labor problems was further defined in 1930. The Church must preach uncompromisingly the principle of the Christian's separation from the world. It must set forth clearly the anti-Christian spirit of Marxian Socialism. It must call attention to the principle of corporate responsibility. It must exercise discipline to the enforcement of Christian principles among its members. The second point is of particular interest, and we quote it. The Church must promote Christian labor organizations:

By setting forth clearly and unequivocally the anti-Christian spirit of Marxian Socialism with its glorification of class hatred, class struggle, and class ethics, and its principle that might makes right; and by placing

158. Acts of Synod, 1916, p. 38.
159. Acts of Synod, 1928, pp. 90-93.

> over against this the great fundamental biblical principles of justice as they apply in the industrial world and ought to be maintained by all those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ.[160]

Responding to a request for greater clarity in its position regarding existing unions, Synod declared in 1943 that "church membership and membership in a so-called neutral union are compatible as long as such a union gives no constitutional warrant to sins, nor shows in its regular activities that it champions sin."[161] Among the grounds adduced for this position, the following is particular significance:

> To adopt the principle, making it applicable to every case, that church membership is incompatible with membership in labor unions which give no constitutional warrant to sin and which do not show in their regular activities that they champion sin or that they are in conflict with the universal principles of justice contained in the Word of God would amount to dangerous separatism, which is condemned by Scripture, John 17:15, I Corinthians 5:9-11.[162]

The most distinctive contribution of the Christian Reformed Church to the discussion of labor problems lay in its support of specifically Christian labor organizations. That support was often reiterated. We quote a statement made by a committee in 1945:

> In conclusion it is hoped that it has become evident that whereas the moral and spiritual dangers to which one exposes himself by active membership in a non-Christian organization are so numerous, there is only one safe solution which should be put into practice wherever this is at all possible; namely, the establishment and promotion of definitely Christian organizations in the social sphere.[163]

Such labor organizations for Christian workers have been in existence for a considerable length of time. Apparently such an organization existed in Grand Rapids by 1892.[164] The existence of such a union in Paterson in 1904 has been previously noted. Other organizations began to appear, necessarily on a small scale, since they drew their membership almost exclusively from the Christian Reformed Church. Such organizations suffered a setback when Synod decided in 1916 that membership in so-called neutral unions was compatible with membership in the Church.[165] By 1932, however, the Christian Labor Association had been formed, and was granted the moral support of the Christian Reformed Church.[166] The *Christian Labor Herald,* a

160. Acts of Synod, 1930, pp. 234 f.
161. Acts of Synod, 1943, p. 102.
162. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 267.
163. Acts of Synod, 1945, p. 326.
164. G. E. Boer addressed "Patrimonium" in Grand Rapids. Cf. De Wachter, Vol. XXV, no. 38 (Nov. 23, 1892), p. 2.
165. Cf. Kromminga, op. cit., p. 132.
166. Acts of Synod, 1932, p. 101.

monthly which is now the official organ of the Christian Labor Association of the United States, has been published since 1915.[167] Contact is maintained with Christian laborers in the Netherlands,[168] and for a while financial support was received from that country.[169]

In answer to certain questions regarding the nature of the Christian Labor Association, Mr. J. Gritter, secretary of the Association writes:

> The C. L. A. organizes workers in all trades or occupations, wherever a sufficient number of workers can be gained to secure bargaining power. In this connection it may be well to state that the C. L. A. does not limit membership to professing Christians but welcomes all those who express agreement with the Christian social principles which it seeks to apply. In that way it draws a considerable number of workers who, although not members of any church, believe in the principles of co-operation for the common good, promotion of the interests of the employer as well as those of the employee, respect for the rights and interests of the public, arbitration of all disputes by qualified neutral men, etc. Also the fact that the C. L. A. states that it will not use the strike weapon except as a last resort, in case of obstinate refusal by an employer to negotiate or to submit to an arbitration award, attracts many workers. Most workers today are afraid of strikes. They are too costly. The C. L. A. has organizations among metal, furniture, bakery, dairy, clothing, paper, construction, transportation, warehouse, feed-mill, and other workers. We have contracts covering such workers with their respective employers.
>
> The program of the unions is to promote just working conditions and co-operative employer-employee relationships. Contracts are negotiated that compare favorably with those of other unions. However, they differ in that the union does not try to usurp the authority of the employer, does not impose unfair employment demands, does not promote employment of "drones" or non-productive workers under the name of some minor union official, pledges a fair day's work for a fair wage, will discipline members who fail in their obligations to the employer, pledges not to call a strike until every avenue for possible settlement of a dispute, including arbitration, has been fully explored.
>
> The C. L. A. was not organized by the church or preachers. It came up spontaneously from Christian men who were convinced of the need of unions but totally disgusted with the existing organizations which violated many of the Christian principles which these workers confess.
>
> The Christian unions have been no more passive than other unions if by that is meant that they were perhaps afraid of the employers, not militant enough, or dominated by employers. Not at all. But there is a difference. C. L. A. unions are active and aggressive in promotion of that which is just. They do not think that it is necessary to use some of the means employed by others to gain the ends which labor seeks. Arousing animosity, hatred, class-conflict, does not promote the best interests of labor. When that is done employers will seek opportunities to "sit on" labor. Thus there is a continual struggle and see-saw for the upper hand. The C. L. A. wants to eliminate that. We want co-operation, promotion of one another's welfare during good and poor times alike.

167. Christian Labor Herald, September, 1947, p. 3.
168. Ibid., p. 1.
169. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1940, p. 111.

> The C. L. A. has only once called a strike to get a contract signed during the years of its history. It will use the strike weapon if nothing else can be done. It has not picketed but will not hesitate to do so if its interests, if fully justifiable, demand it. It has no scruples against such an exercise of free speech provided it is done lawfully, without molestation of others or improper interferences. It must be used only as a means to acquaint the public with the union's grievances.
>
> Hostile organizations have undoubtedly accused the C. L. A. of being a means of the church or of other interests to muzzle labor. . . . An A. F. L. union once brought such a charge to the National Labor Relations Board, claiming that the C. L. A. was church-controlled, not a bona-fide labor movement, dominated by employers, etc. The N. L. R. B. investigated the charges thoroughly and dismissed them. The C. L. A. was given a clean bill of health.
>
> That there are no parallel Christian employers' organizations is something the C. L. A. cannot account for. Perhaps the need for such organizations has not been felt. Generally speaking businessmen's organizations in their public activity have been more ethical in their dealings with the public than the secular unions have been. That of course is also due to the fact that they are more directly dependent upon the public. Employers' organizations have not openly flouted the rights of others as unions have done. However, the C. L. A. would welcome Christian employers' organizations which would seek to apply Christian principles also. That a lack of them savors of one-sidedness, I cannot quite see . . . We seek to make religion stand for something in all relationships of life. Instead of being an opiate (Cf. Marx's charge that "religion is the opiate of the people") we make religion, or religious convictions, the incentive to action for the promotion of the justice and righteousness and love which God demands among men.[170]

The relationship of the Christian Reformed Church to this organization is similar to its relationship to the Christian schools. A committee stated in 1930 that it was not the business of the Church to call such an organization into existence.[171] Synod expressly refused in 1943 to legislate the members of the church into such organizations.[172] But the ministers are asked to support this cause, and the Christian Labor Association is on the list of causes approved for moral and financial support by the Christian Reformed Churches.[173]

It is impossible to establish any direct connection between this phase of social concern in the Christian Reformed Church and the theology

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170. Letter from Mr. J. Gritter, December 5, 1947.

171. "Furthermore it is the conviction of your committee that Christian labor organizations and similar organizations in social life cannot be called into existence to order, but can only originate in a voluntary and spontaneous desire of the communal Christian life to express itself in an effective way."
Agenda for Synod, 1930, pp. 232 f.

172. " . . . for Synod to assert that members of our church should join one or other social organization is another matter. It is the task of the Church to declare the principles of the Bible which shall obtain in the social spheres, but it is the duty of various organizations to apply these principles."
Acts of Synod, 1943, p. 401.

173. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1946, p. 24.

of the Social Gospel. The Christian Reformed Church would flatly deny that "theology needs the social gospel to vitalize it."[174] That church would consider it an unwarranted use of the terms of historic theology to say that "an increasing number of young men and women — and some of the best of them — are getting their call to repentance, to a new way of life, and to the conquest of self" in the "wars and exploitations of modern civilization."[175] Christian Reformed theology looks for a future society which will be made up of redeemed persons; but it knows nothing of the redemption of super-personal forces.[176] In short, the theology of the social gospel arouses more opposition than co-operation among the Christian Reformed people.

But an indirect connection is inevitable. The discussion of this subject in the Christian Reformed Church arose out of the labor situation in the United States. The social gospel played an important part in lending support to the laboring man and giving his cause social standing. It would be hard to demonstrate any closer connection than this, however. It is indeed true that the Kingdom of God is prominently mentioned in discussions of labor problems, e.g. in the report submitted in 1930:

> Only organizations consisting of men of character and principle, who willingly take their stand on the Word of God also in social life, who are very much in earnest about obeying and maintaining the laws of the Kingdom of God in the industrial as well as in every other sphere, and are even ready to forego material benefits for the sake of the righteousness of the Kingdom, will have the necessary stamina to stand in the unequal struggle.[177]

But it could not well be maintained that this conception of the Kingdom was derived from the social gospel. It is much more likely that this element of social concern was, like certain others, derived from the theological views of Dr. Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands.

On the basis of the facts related above, we would not be justified in asserting that the Christian Reformed Church assumed a position of leadership in dealing with the problems of labor and industry. It is a recognized fact that the churches were slow to undertake social commitments. Among those churches, this particular body was not fore-

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174. Walter Rauschenbusch, **A Theology for the Social Gospel** (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), p. 1.
175. **Ibid.**, pp. 107 f.
176. "Super-personal forces are saved when they come under the law of Christ." **Ibid.**, p. 113.
177. **Agenda for Synod, 1930**, p. 233.

most. The "one safe solution" which it proposes to the labor problem, however, is distinctive and characteristic. The Christian labor movement which it supports is not as effective an agency as the Christian school movement. Although the Christian Labor Association has obtained governmental recognition and does carry some weight, particularly in Grand Rapids and vicinity, it is less an organization of real power than a symbolic gesture. Its operations are attended by real difficulties, especially in view of the rising power of the C. I. O. and the A. F. L. But as a gesture, it signifies once again that the Christian Reformed Church is concerned with the Christianity of its members in every walk of life. It re-emphasizes that church's preference for purity of doctrine and life over other considerations. The Christian Reformed Church maintains that justice, based upon the Bible, should be practiced between management and labor. Generally speaking, however, it has left the attainment of that justice to the labor organizations. It has concerned itself rather with safeguarding the Christian principles of its members in the labor organizations to which they belong.

The reactions of the Christian Reformed Church to wartime conditions are worthy of note. During the Civil War, no official communications were sent to the United States government. This may have been due in part to the insufficient orientation of the church in its American environment at that time. But it was probably due rather to a feeling of insignificance. The church had only one minister at the outbreak of the conflict, and only three by the time it ended. Within the bounds of the church, however, notice was taken of the war, and there is no doubt as to the support of the federal government by the church. It should be borne in mind, of course, that the tiny Christian Reformed Church was located entirely in Northern territory. There would have been no excuse for a division of sentiment such as separated the northern and southern elements of other denominations. The citations given are intended to show that the Christian Reformed Church supported its government, and not in any way to indicate that sympathy with the Union cause was surprising. In the minutes of the Classical Assembly held October 7, 1863, the following entry appears:

> The president asked how to deal with members who make themselves guilty of slander against the supreme authority of the land in this present rebellion; whether such members can and may be permitted to

come to the Lord's Supper. The Assembly called attention in this respect to the Form for Communion, in which this matter is clearly mentioned.[178]

The same matter was again discussed in 1864:

> The delegate from Grand Rapids asked whether members of the congregation who attend meetings where speeches are made attacking the government or leading to rebellion should be barred from the Lord's Supper according to the Form. This is unanimously answered in the affirmative.[179]

Further notice of the war was taken on days of prayer. On July 4, 1864, a special day of prayer was observed by all the congregations in view of the war conditions.[180] At the conclusion of the war it was decided to designate a day of thanksgiving for peace if the government itself failed to do so.[181]

The Spanish-American War was not reflected in the *Acts* of the Synod of 1898, except for the discussion of a possible mission to Cuba in case that country was liberated.[182] But public opinion within the church was strongly in favor of the American cause. A tendency to hold a grudge against Spain for her part in the Eighty Years' War against Holland is seen in an article in *De Wachter.*[183] When war appeared inevitable, wholehearted support of the government was urged.[184] Another writer feared at first that America would lack the blessing of God in the struggle because of national sins:

> And, last but not least, America is a Christian and Protestant nation, but has not America sinned greatly against God, by rejecting His Word in many respects, by neglecting His day and worship, and by adopting almost all of the freethinking and unspirituality fostered by the apostate people of the old world?[185]

But the same writer on a later occasion wrote a fiery defense of the position of the United States in answer to an attack by a Dutch

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178. Synodical Minutes Christian Reformed Church 1857-1880, pp. 30 f.

179. Ibid., p. 45.

180. Ibid., p. 36

181. Ibid., p. 57.
It is said that the little colony in Michigan furnished 420 soldiers in the Civil War—one for every ten of its population. All but one were born abroad. These, of course, included members of the Reformed as well as the Christian Reformed Church.
Cf. Van den Bosch, op. cit., p. 53.

182. Acts of Synod, 1898, p. 23.

183. "Among us Hollanders, the desire is aroused to repay Spain for this. That desire cannot be suppressed when we remember that just as William the Silent was once betrayed to death by Spanish duplicity, so also the Maine with her 260 brave seamen was disposed of by the same agency."
Cf. De Wachter, Vol. XXXI, no. 9 (April 20, 1898), p. 1.

184. "Now that war must come, no one may hesitate to serve his country with prayers and contributions, with heart and soul, and if it be asked, with bearing of arms. However, this is not a matter to be lightly regarded."
Ibid., no. 10 (April 27, 1898), p. 1.

185. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. II (April, 1898), p. 118.

writer,[186] and still later spoke of "the glorious victory of our sea-hero Dewey at Manila."[187] In view of such utterances and the lack of dissenting comment, it is probable that the failure of the Synod to send a resolution of support to the government resulted either from a feeling of insignificance or from the conviction that the war was nearly won and such a resolution would be meaningless.

An official declaration of the church was finally forthcoming during World War I. The Synod of 1916 was requested to make a declaration concerning the European war, but declined to do so on the grounds that this was "purely an international question" and it was not within the province of the Church to make declarations on it.[188] By the time the Synod of 1918 had opened, however, sentiment had changed. The first official act of that synod, after the preliminary exercises were completed, was to send the following telegram:

> To the President of the United States, Washington, D. C.
> Mr. President:
>
> The Christian Reformed Church, in Synod assembled at Grand Rapids, Michigan, send you their greetings and pledge you their wholehearted support in this critical time. We will support the Government with our prayers, lives, and property in this righteous cause.
>
> Respectfully,
>
> I. Van Dellen, President
> W. Stuart, Clerk.[189]

In due time a reply was received from the presidential secretary.[190] The same synod received a "Peace Manifesto" submitted by one of the Canadian Christian Reformed Churches. The Synod refused to act upon this document on the grounds that the United States was officially at war.[191]

The most revealing utterance of the Christian Reformed Church on the subject of war and peace was a declaration issued in 1939. The occasion for this declaration was an overture sent to the Synod of 1936 asking that Synod express its disapproval of "much of present-day pacifism which condemns all war and loses sight of the state's duty to maintain justice if need be with the sword," and also that "Synod enunciate the principle that all wars of aggression are contrary to the Word of God and that the members of the Church of Christ are

186. Ibid., (May, 1898), pp. 174-180.
187. Ibid., (July, 1898), p. 265.
188. Acts of Synod, 1916, p. 35.
189. Acts of Synod, 1918, p. 7.
190. Ibid., p. 21.
191. Ibid., p. 87.

justified, in actual war of aggression, to feel free before God not to bear arms." The same Synod received a lengthy objection to the second part of that overture, and the matter was placed in the hands of a committee for further consideration.[192]

After having recommitted the matter in 1937,[193] Synod adopted a declaration in 1939.[194] It is entitled, "Testimony Regarding the Christian's Attitude Toward War and Peace." We summarize its contents. It is the duty of Christians, the government, and every citizen to promote peace between individuals, groups, and nations. The Christian cannot support, but must oppose militarism as an attitude of mind which glorifies war for war's sake or war for national aggrandizement. On the other hand, the Christian has the solemn duty to defend his country against attack, to protect the weak, and in general to promote justice and fair dealings between the nations of the world. A nation which is attacked by another has the moral right and duty to defend itself. The Christian must oppose the pacifism of those whose conviction and attitude it is to condemn every war, and hence to refuse to bear arms under any conditions. Synod utters a solemn warning against such pacifism as it is coming to prominent expression in the United States. Scriptural arguments for this pacifism are answered, and Scriptural arguments against it adduced. The Christian who consistently refuses to bear arms at the call of his government is disloyal not only to his country but to his God-given duty. The Christian may refuse to bear arms only when that will involve him in actions which are clearly in conflict with the revealed will of God. Not conscience, but Scripture is the final court of appeal.[195]

We quote the last three paragraphs of this lengthy testimony as representative of its language and spirit:

> Not only must the Church reject the claim of the pacifistic conscientious objector, but there is also another kind of conscientious objector whose claims cannot stand the test of Scripture and the Creed. There are those who would refuse to take part in any war when, and as long as, they are not persuaded of the justness of the given war. With the frequent complexity of the causes of modern wars and the difficulty of the average citizen to be adequately informed on this complexity of causes at the time the war breaks out, it is clear that this may be the predicament in which many a Christian may find himself. But

192. Acts of Synod, 1936, pp. 29 f.
193. Acts of Synod, 1937, pp. 49 f.
194. Acts of Synod, 1939, p. 27.
195. Ibid., pp. 240-249.

> in such a situation he is not justified in refusing to perform military service. He who would maintain this position overlooks the fact that in such a situation the prior duty of each citizen to obey the government must have the right of way. This type of conscientious objector does not face the moral alternative; to fight or to do nothing; but; to fight or to disobey his government. His *uncertainty* as to the justice of the given war can be no justifiable ground for refusing to obey his government.
>
> The only conscientious objector to military service whose claim the Church cannot repudiate is he who, recognizing his duty to obey his government and to defend his country in response to its call to arms, has intelligent and adequate grounds to be convinced that the given war to which he is summoned is an unjust war. When he is absolutely certain in the light of the principles of the Word of God that his country is fighting for a wrong cause, he cannot morally justify his participation in the given war. War is killing people and for anyone to engage in such killing of fellowmen when he is convinced in his heart that the cause for which he is fighting is an unjust one, this procedure cannot be justified before the tribunal of God and His Word. The only course open to such a person is to resort to passive resistance and to refuse to bear arms in that given war.
>
> In closing, Synod would urge upon all to pray for righteousness and peace in national and international affairs; to study the revealed Word for an understanding of the will of God for the guidance of the life of citizens and their government; to obey all lawfully constituted authorities for God's sake; and, if a serious conflict of duty should occur, to obey God rather than men.[196]

Besides the obvious significance of this declaration, it is a reiteration of the orthodox standpoint of the Christian Reformed Church in that it specifically associated the pacifism which it condemned with theological liberalism.[197]

Other communications of the Christian Reformed Church with the civil government may be briefly mentioned. Synod twice petitioned the government to establish a national day of prayer, in 1918 and 1932.[198] In 1930 the Synod submitted to Congressman Carl E. Mapes, of Michigan, an objection to the "Cotsworth International Fixed Calendar," stressing the position that "the weekly cycle ordained by God Himself in the very beginning of time, according to the Word of God, should not be altered."[199] Finally, in 1940, the Synod addressed a communication to President Roosevelt, protesting his appointment of Mr. Myron C. Taylor as his personal representative to the Vatican, and requesting his recall.[200]

196. Ibid., pp. 248 f.
197. Ibid., p. 272.
198. Acts of Synod, 1918, p. 51; 1932, pp. 41 f.
199. Acts of Synod, 1930, pp. 40 f.
200. Acts of Synod, 1940, pp. 43 f.

In the communications and declarations listed above one can trace an awakening self-consciousness and social consciousness on the part of the Christian Reformed Church, and a desire to make the principles of the Reformed way of life felt in matters of patriotic and religious significance.

One of the threats of Americanization which the members of the Christian Reformed Church feared was "activism." In the light of the growing contact with the environment and the increased efforts to influence that environment which are reflected in this chapter, it is natural to ask whether any traces of activism are beginning to appear. There are as yet no clear indications of the advance of activism, when that term is properly defined. There are indeed ample signs of increased activity; that is the burden of this entire chapter. But in that respect, the contrast is not with religion as expressed in the Reformed traditions, but with the earlier condition of the Christian Reformed Church in America, as a body preoccupied with defending itself rather than making its influence felt. The signs of increased activity are in keeping with the conviction that when the truth is properly understood, it must be propagated. This is quite in keeping with historic Calvinism, and cannot be interpreted as a distinctively American development, or as something which the early leaders of the church would have had cause to fear. If activism is understood as a tendency to relegate theological truth to a relatively unimportant position, it must be said that no such tendency is as yet clearly evident in the Christian Reformed Church. Certain individuals within the church may hold such a position, but whether their opinions will prevail only the future can disclose.

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The Christian Reformed Church is conscious of the duty to exert an outgoing influence and of the advantages accruing from such an influence. It contributed to mission causes from the first, and gradually undertook its own mission program on the domestic and foreign fields, a program of considerable scope in view of the limited resources of the church. Besides the indirect influence of its publications on the environment, it published tracts and assisted other organizations in the distribution of Christian literature. It operates its own radio program

in a deliberate effort to influence the environment, and contributes to the support of several institutions of mercy. It supports the cause of temperance and the observance of the Lord's Day and opposes secret societies. It has openly supported the government in time of war and issued communications to the government and public declarations on matters of religious and patriotic interest. These activities have helped to keep its orthodoxy from stagnation by making it an orthodoxy with a mission.

CHAPTER VII

Maintenance of Other Parts of the Calvinistic Pattern

Our study thus far has been concerned principally with the doctrinal aspects of orthodoxy. We have sought to demonstrate how the Christian Reformed Church preserved its doctrinal orthodoxy, both in theory and in the practical application of doctrine to life. We notice finally a similar conservatism in other aspects of the Calvinistic pattern, particularly the worship and polity of the Christian Reformed Church. In treating those subjects we shall make frequent mention of the original attitudes of Calvinism to these matters, so that the practice of the Christian Reformed Church may be compared with its avowed original.

We shall present first a few general characteristics of the worship of the Christian Reformed Church. The time-honored custom of the church is to have two worship services. Formerly these were most commonly held in the morning and afternoon. In many instances, where some members had to travel considerable distances, or had livestock to be cared for in the evening, there was only a brief period between the two services, and many members took a lunch with them to church, eating together in the church basement. The afternoon service has now almost disappeared, making way for an evening service.

During the period of language transition it was not uncommon for a congregation to have four services, two in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening. The morning services were in Dutch and English, respectively, the afternoon service in Dutch, and the evening service in English. Several congregations still maintain an afternoon Dutch service besides the morning and evening English services. The practice of meeting twice on Sunday for worship is faithfully maintained. There are no known instances of a "vacation" in which a church closes its doors, nor of the elimination of the evening

service for the summer period, nor even of union services with other congregations during specified periods.

Although no official decision can be discovered on this score, the time limits for these services seem to be placed by mutual consent at an hour minimum and an hour and a half maximum. The maximum time seems to be considered the more ideal and normative. The shorter service is usually in use only in case of extremely hot weather or services on special Christian holidays or days of prayer. The maximum limit is seldom exceeded except when the Lord's Supper is administered. An estimate placing the average length of services at an hour and twenty minutes would most likely not be far wrong.

The most prominent single element in these services is the sermon. The length of the sermon may vary from twenty minutes at least to an hour at most, depending on the time consumed by other elements of the worship and the length of the entire service. A recent writer says:

> It would be easy to say that the sermon is the central element in worship in every Reformed service. That is the traditional answer, and we feel sure that few if any of us would care to disagree. . . . It is the climax in which God speaks to His people.[1]

But he goes on to complain that many Christian Reformed people have misapplied this principle, attending church merely to receive, rather than to worship in the full sense of the term. This emphasis upon the sermon is in line with the emphasis of the Reformers upon the didactic elements of worship.[2]

Attendance upon these services is generally faithful. Most Christian Reformed members attend church at least once on Sunday, and twice if possible. Presence of small children in the family may make the ideal of attending two services impossible of realization by some, although nurseries are maintained in some churches, and small children are brought to the services in many others. Delinquency in church attendance is frequently a subject of reproof at family visitation. Although no specific decision includes church attendance as a subject of discipline,[3] extreme delinquency is often considered a lawful cause for instituting discipline, and even for proceeding to excommunication if no improvement is noted.

1. Cf. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (April 18, 1947), p. 491.
2. Cf. Qualben, op. cit., p. 270.
3. The closest approach is in the provision of discipline for neglect of the Lord's Supper. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1904, p. 38.

The order of worship to be used in these services has been the subject of much discussion and some controversy. The order which went unquestioned for the first sixty years of the existence of the Christian Reformed Church was a corruption of the order derived from the Reformers. A recent writer says:

> The groups in the Netherlands were still more specifically influenced by the Order of Worship drawn up by the Polish nobleman and reformer à Lasco, for use in the London congregation of exiles. Although following in the main the pattern of Calvin, he used the law in public worship as a teacher of sin rather than as a rule expressing gratitude.
>
> . . . these churches gradually departed from this pattern. Although most of the elements were retained, their harmony and the relationship of the parts to the whole were lost. Thus, for example, the law was entirely divorced from the confession of sin. Often the psalms which were sung did not reflect the message. Only the sermon seemed important to the people, and the idea of meeting for fellowship with God was ignored.[4]

Criticism of the existing order was implied by an overture received by the Synod of 1916, requesting a uniform order for the English-speaking congregations. The request specified that the congregation should take a more active part in the new order. Commenting upon the request, the advisory committee of Synod favored revision, and recommended that it should apply also to Dutch and German services. A study committee of Synod was appointed upon this basis.[5]

In the course of the committee's study further criticisms were forthcoming. It was charged that too much was left to the discretion of the liturgist; that the church in general held rigidly to the old and condemned everything that was new; and that the service consisted of disconnected elements without any organizing principle.[6] The failure to include confession of sins and absolution was criticized. The lack of appropriate responses was deplored.[7] One committee stated:

> Compared with what our fathers had, we have not progressed, but retrogressed.
>
> This is capable of historical explanation. Our fathers failed to leave us a complete liturgy. We have indeed a collection of liturgical writings, but not a single Synod left us a complete liturgy. Only the beginning (votum) and the end (benediction) were prescribed, but the further arrangement of the various elements was largely left to the discretion of the liturgist. Hence the result that some elements have fallen away which cannot well be omitted; hence also the lack of unity.[8]

4. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (June 28, 1946), p. 811.
5. Acts of Synod, 1916, p. 30.
6. Acts of Synod, 1918, pp. 152 f.
7. Ibid., p. 154.
8. Ibid., p. 155.

We present a sample of the kind of order which was criticized:

Votum or Invocation
Salutation
Psalm
The Law
Scripture Lesson
Psalm
General Prayer
Psalm and Offering
Sermon
Closing Prayer
Psalm (and Doxology)
Benediction[9]

In arranging a revised order, the committee was motivated by several principles, which came to informal expression. There was a desire to pay due heed to the opinions of the Reformers on worship, to make use of the study of this subject by other American denominations, and at the same time to avoid ritualism and formalism. Respect for the position of the Reformers is seen in the following quotations:

> Confession of Sin and Absolution occupied a prominent place in all the great Protestant liturgies of the Reformation period.[10]
>
> . . . this ancient service, to which Calvin and the other reformers attached such great significance.[11]
>
> The isolated position which the Apostles' Creed has in our present form of services deprives it of well-nigh all liturgical value. It is found in the liturgies of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and à Lasco, and was intended as an expression of the faith of the Church, hence as an *actum a parte ecclesiae,* and not, as some conceive of it today, as a means of instruction in the chief articles of the Christian faith.[12]
>
> Confession of Sin and Absolution are elements which originally belong to the Reformed liturgy and were dropped only under the influence of an unreasonable prejudice against fixed forms of worship.[13]

Reference to the activities of other denominations is made in the report which advises the appointment of a committee of revision:

> This is a great task. When the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. undertook this work a few years ago, a broad committee of sixteen members was appointed, which completed its task after almost three years of diligent labor, during which time its work was presented to two successive Assemblies for approval.[14]

Reference to Presbyterian custom is also made in the report of the revision committee:

> It appears that the Presbyterian custom of letting the officiating minister offer a short prayer after the offering in which the Lord's blessing

9. Acts of Synod, 1928, p. 287.
10. Acts of Synod, 1920, p. 190.
11. Ibid., p. 191.
12. Ibid., pp. 193 f.
13. Acts of Synod, 1928, p. 282.
14. Acts of Synod, 1918, p. 156.

upon the gift is asked finds considerable favor in our circles. Your committee had to face the question whether it should recommend this custom, disapprove it, or propose to leave its use optional. We have come to the conclusion that there is nothing in this custom which conflicts with the Reformed conception and principles of worship.[15]

The desire to avoid formalism was expressed in 1928:

> Concerning this order of worship we would remark that though it is a little more elaborate than our present order, it still has the simplicity which is characteristic of Calvinistic worship. There is nothing that smacks of ritualism, that is, of symbolism.[16]

The aims which the proposed new order sought to realize were also clearly enunciated:

> Such a common liturgy must embody especially the fundamental liturgical principle that the essence of public worship lies in the meeting of God with His people. . . . These . . . exercises should succeed one another in an appropriate logical and psychological order. These exercises should contain nothing which is mysterious and incomprehensible to those who participate in them, lest it be impossible for them to worship the Lord in "spirit and in truth." These services should be so arranged that the characteristic simplicity of a Reformed church service be maintained. We must guard against the modern tendency to Ritualism in which aesthetic pleasure is substituted and mistaken for spiritual edification, and formalism takes the place of a worship "in spirit and in truth."[17]

With these aims in mind, the committee proposed the following order:

ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR THE MORNING SERVICE

(Organ Prelude)

Part I Introductory Service

A Parte Ecclesiae — Votum
Dei — Salutation
Ecclesiae — Psalm (Psalm 95, 84, etc.)

Part II Service of Reconciliation

Dei — Summary of the Law
Ecclesiae — Confession of Sin and Penitential Psalm
Dei — Absolution
Ecclesiae — Apostles' Creed
Ecclesiae — Psalm of Praise

Part III Service of Gratitude

Ecclesiae — General Prayer, concluded with "Our Father"
Ecclesiae — Offering
Ecclesiae — Psalm of Thanksgiving

Part IV Service of the Word

Dei — Reading of Scripture
Dei — Preaching

15. Acts of Synod, 1928, p. 290.
16. Ibid., p. 292.
17. Acts of Synod, 1920, p. 186.

Part V Closing Service
Ecclesiae — Prayer of Thanksgiving
Ecclesiae — Concluding Psalm or Doxology or Both
Dei — Benediction[18]

This proposed order of worship is like Calvin's Strasburg Order in including both confession of sins and absolution, and in placing the reading of Scripture immediately before the sermon. Calvin's order, however, places the reading of the law after the absolution and puts the general, or long, prayer at the conclusion of the sermon.[19] The proposed order therefore could not claim strict adherence to the model of the Reformers. It rightfully claimed to be in closer conformity than the old order, and sought acceptance on the grounds of its unifying principle and logical sequence.

The Synod decided to submit this proposed order, together with the explanatory material, to the consistories and classes for consideration.[20] The wisdom of this cautious procedure is seen from the fact that the next Synod received nine overtures, all of them critical of this matter, from as many classes. Deciding that the churches were not yet ready for change, Synod continued the same committee and asked them to give the matter of revision publicity in the church papers.[21] In this decision one can detect on the one hand a conviction on the part of Synod that revision was necessary, and on the other hand the realization that it would not be easily introduced to the congregations. The study committee seemed to feel that by this decision it was being blamed for a situation over which it had no control. The committee protested that its task was impossible, but was instructed again in 1924 to continue its work.[22] The committee then consented to proceed only if Synod would reaffirm "the principle adopted at previous Synods that a uniform order of services is desirable and necessary." This request was granted in 1926.[23]

The matter reached its *status quo* in 1930. Fourteen overtures and twelve appeals, all opposing the new order in its existing form, were received by the synod of that year.[24] In the advisory committee's sum-

18. Ibid., p. 187.
19. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), Vol. VII, "The Swiss Reformation," pp. 372 f.
20. Acts of Synod, 1920, p. 26.
21. Acts of Synod, 1922, pp. 66-69.
22. Acts of Synod, 1924, p. 105.
23. Acts of Synod, 1926, p. 43.
24. Acts of Synod, 1930, pp. 155 f.

mary they fell into three broad classes: practical objections which pointed to the unrest aroused in the churches through the attempts to impose a new order; formal objections which questioned the right of Synod to establish a uniform order; and material objections to the contents of the new order.[25] The existence of the unrest mentioned in the first class of objections was manifest. The revision committee had spoken of it in 1928 in these terms:

> The committee could not avoid receiving the impression that it was fighting a false conservatism which refused to be convinced.[26]

The formal right of Synod to establish a uniform order of worship was a more controversial subject. A revision committee had already expressed itself on this subject in 1920:

> Such liturgical unity in all our churches . . . is therefore a matter of principle and it may consequently not be left to the discretion of the individual consistories to determine upon the mode of public worship as they see fit. It is a matter which belongs to the jurisdiction of the Synod, whose lawful decisions are binding for all the churches, in so far as they do not conflict with the Word of God.[27]

Upon request, the Synod of 1926 also expressed itself on this point:

> Denominational unity is expressed by unity of worship as well as by unity of doctrine and discipline.
>
> Our Church Order contains a number of provisions regarding our public worship which imply the necessity of unity and uniformity in public worship. (Arts. 16, 20, 56, 57, 58, 62, 63, 66, 67, 76, 77, 78.)
>
> In the past contributions to uniformity in liturgy have been made, such as the forms for Baptism, the Lord's Supper, etc. . . .[28]

The Synod of 1928 was the most explicit of all on this point:

> . . . that the regulation of public worship should not be left to the individual churches, since our denominational existence requires unity of doctrine, discipline, and *worship*. Consequently that it is the task of the Synod, representing all the churches, to alter our present form of worship, and that only minor details should be left to the individual consistories. In short, that our churches should have a uniform though flexible order of worship.[29]

The sentiment of the churches was not in favor of this position. Many of the appeals received by the Synod of 1930 concerned this point. Recognizing this sentiment, the Synod of 1930 approved the opinion of an advisory committee, which was in part as follows:

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25. Ibid., pp. 156 f.
26. Acts of Synod, 1928, p. 277.
27. Acts of Synod, 1920, p. 186.
28. Acts of Synod, 1926, pp. 43 f.
29. Acts of Synod, 1928, pp. 50 f.

> It is the position of your Committee that it does not lie within the province of synodical legislation to determine upon a specific order of worship and to enforce its introduction into the churches . . .
>
> Or are there also matters brought to the attention of Synod, in which for the welfare and progress of the churches, Synod is not called to legislate, but to give advice and guidance, and even conduct a campaign of education? . . .
>
> It is a manifestation of Congregationalism when the local office claims the right to decide for itself in all matters, without distinguishing between that which is the concern of the Church at large, and that which pertains solely to the welfare of the local congregation. On the other hand, it smacks of hierarchy, when a major assembly fails to make the same distinction and takes the position, that it is called upon to legislate in all matters, and that no territory is left which constitutes the peculiar sphere in which the local office has the right to decide with the interests of the local congregation in view.[30]

In keeping with the advice of this committee, the Synod rescinded the clauses of the decision of 1928 which made the introduction of the new order obligatory. Instead, it was decided "that the New Order of Worship (as revised) is laid before the churches with the recommendation of Synod, and that its instruction (introduction) is left to the discretion of each local church."[31]

Not only was the idea of enforced unity dropped, but the form of the order to be recommended was also changed. Serious objections were found to the service of reconciliation.[32] The advisory committee summarized the objections to this service as follows:

> They (absolution and the service of reconciliation) are not founded upon Scripture; they are unnecessary; they foster formalism and ritualism; the absolution is lifted to a sacrament; it will push the preaching into the background; it is a step in the direction of Rome; God alone can forgive sins; the absolution transfers the exercise of the power of the keys from the Word to the man and his office.[33]

The committee made no comments upon the questionable validity of some of these objections. Its object was to reflect the scope and nature of the resistance to the proposed change among the various Christian Reformed congregations and classes.

Acting upon the advice of this committee, the Synod made changes in the recommended order which resulted in the following order of worship:

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30. Acts of Synod, 1930, pp. 173-176. These pages contain a rather full discussion of the discretionary powers of Synod as conceived of in Reformed polity.

31. Ibid., pp. 186 f.

32. "However, practically all the objections of a material nature are entered against the service of reconciliation and its various elements, particularly the absolution." Ibid., p. 157.

33. Ibid., p. 158.

1. Votum
2. Salutation
3. Psalm
4. Reading of the Law
5. Psalm of consecration and devotion
6. Prayer (including element of confession and concluding with the Lord's Prayer)
7. Offering and Psalm
8. Offertory Prayer (optional)
9. Scripture Lesson
10. Sermon (including declaration of pardon)
11. Prayer
12. Psalm (with or without Doxology)
13. Benediction
14. Doxology if desired here[34]

1. Psalm
or 2. Invocation or Votum
3. Salutation

One cannot question the practical wisdom and Reformed character of the decision to follow the wishes of the churches in this matter. The net results of the whole discussion, however, are far from satisfactory. As one writer has recently stated:

> Instead of returning to the simple order used before that time (1930) many churches, although refusing to adopt the new order throughout, began to compromise in an effort to satisfy the desires of all. This has led to endless confusion. Hardly two congregations follow the same pattern throughout. Many of the additions seem to be the result of a desire to imitate other churches rather than to return to the Reformed pattern.[35]

If it be asked whether this is a maintenance of the Calvinistic pattern, the answer must depend on what is taken as the pattern. Calvin himself was unable to take the form for absolution to Geneva with him. The opposition of the Christian Reformed people to this form was like that of the early Reformed people, and for the same reasons. Obviously, the Christian Reformed people did not fear a Catholicism which they had but recently rejected. But they did fear a rising formalism in the American church world. They chose to hold fast to traditionalism at the expense of a more uniform and meaningful order of worship.

It will be recognized from the above discussion that the Christian Reformed Church is not a liturgical church in the full sense of the term. This is freely admitted by the church itself.[36] Sperry calls tradition "the most subtle and powerful enemy of such reality in wor-

34. "If these changes and eliminations are made, we have a thoroughly Reformed and beautifully logical sequence of liturgical elements."
Ibid., p. 168. Cf. pp. 184 ff. for specific changes and the decisions bringing them about.

35. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (June 28, 1946), p. 811.

36. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (May 10, 1946), p. 587.

ship."[37] If this is true, it is not surprising that the admitted traditionalism of the Christian Reformed Church should stand in the way of any fundamental changes in its worship.

Just what influenced this renewed interest in worship within the Christian Reformed Church? Christian Reformed writers have appeared eager to disown any connection between this attempted improvement in worship and the general desire for a "liturgical revival in the Protestant churches."[38] The editor of a regular column on worship wrote as follows:

> For a long time voices were heard in our Christian Reformed churches favoring a study of our Order of Worship. This was largely the result of the reawakening of Reformed church life in the Netherlands during the previous century. Both the movements of 1834 and 1886 (Secession and "Doleantie" in the Netherlands) returned to the Reformed fathers. It could be expected that this would lead to a renewed study of what constitutes Reformed congregational worship.[39]

Certain facts make it necessary to qualify this position. Although no direct indebtedness to American discussion is openly admitted in the literature of the liturgical discussion, indirect references to the American environment lead us to conclude that the impulse to improve worship came from the discussions then current in the American church world. We note the following indications of this fact. The first committee appointed to study the problem stated, "Other churches have fitting responses. We do not believe that there is a reason for us as Reformed to ignore them completely."[40] Later committees spoke of guarding against modern tendencies to ritualism, and maintaining the characteristic simplicity of Reformed church services.[41] Mention was made of the Worship Committee of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.[42] It must further be borne in mind that this discussion arose during the period in which the Americanization of the Christian Reformed Church was proceeding at an accelerated pace. Two facts lend point to this consideration; the original request for improvement in worship specified improvement in the *English* services;[43] and as late as 1928 the advisory committee expected opposition to the introduction of certain elements especially from the

37. Willard L. Sperry, **Reality in Worship** (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 208.
38. **The Banner**, Vol. LXXXI (May 3, 1946), p. 555.
39. **The Banner**, Vol. LXXXI (June 28, 1946), p. 811.
40. **Acts of Synod, 1918**, p. 154.
41. **Acts of Synod, 1920**, p. 186.
42. **Acts of Synod, 1918**, p. 156.
43. **Acts of Synod, 1916**, p. 30.

Dutch-speaking congregations.[44] It seems far more plausible to find the impulse leading to a discussion of worship in this current American discussion than in Dutch movements of the preceding century.

On the other hand, the attempt was made to be true to the Reformed fathers as far as the content of the revisions was concerned. Throughout the literature of the discussion, appeal is constantly made to the Reformers, to the Dutch writers of the period immediately following the Reformation, and to such leaders as Dr. Abraham Kuyper. With the exception of the responses and the offertory prayer, American customs were frowned upon. Sperry speaks of certain churches as manifesting "an inability to comprehend anything which cannot be used."[45] This inability is called "one of the deeper problems attacked by religion, especially in America."[46] The insistence of the Christian Reformed committees on the characteristic simplicity of Reformed worship seems to place them in the class criticized by Sperry's description. We must therefore distinguish between the impulse to undertake the discussion of the order of worship and the content of that discussion. In the material of the discussion, the attempt was made to return directly to the Reformed fathers. But the impulse to discuss this matter arose out of the live and vigorous discussion of worship which had been carried on in the American church world from the beginning of the century. Perhaps the failure on the part of the church as a whole to distinguish between these two influences contributed to the inconclusive character of the results of this discussion.

The history of hymn singing in the Christian Reformed Church involves the story of a determined opposition to the introduction of hymns. Since the Synod of Dort, approved songs had been limited to the 150 Psalms, versified versions of the Ten Commandments, the Twelve Articles of Faith, and the Lord's Prayer, and the songs of Mary, Simeon, and Zacharias.[47] Opposition to the introduction of hymns had been among the causes of the Secession of 1834,[48] and the same complaint was made against the Reformed Church in America in

44. Acts of Synod, 1928, p. 290.
45. Sperry, op. cit., p. 90.
46. Ibid.
47. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (October 18, 1946), p. 1211.
48. Kromminga, op. cit., pp. 82 f.

the Secession of 1857.[49] For a long period of time this attitude met with no opposition. When in 1876 a subscriber wrote to *De Wachter* defending hymns and urging their use as breathing a New Testament spirit,[50] the reply was made that the Psalms were perfectly applicable to the New Testament situation.[51] A later writer listed eight reasons for not including hymns in public worship, dwelling especially upon the fact that hymns were of human origin.[52]

Some concessions to hymn singing were made, and that with surprising ease, when the congregations of Classis Hackensack were admitted to the Christian Reformed Church in 1890. The committee appointed to eliminate the difficulties in the union proceedings seemed to beg the basic questions in its report:

> Your committee has examined this difficulty from every angle, and is of the opinion that, since we have been aware for years of the fact that the T. R. P. D. Church has 52 hymns, and this was no obstacle to the advice given to Classis Hudson to accomplish the union, and since one of our own congregations, Lagrave St., Grand Rapids, has the same manner of worship, this matter may be no stumbling-block in the way of our union with the T. R. P. D. Church. Moreover, not all congregations among us have the same form of worship nor the same name for their polity, and therefore we are of the opinion that the hymn question:
>
> 1. Is more a question of form than of essence;
>
> 2. that we ourselves are in conflict with art. 69 of the Church Order of Dort. At least certain hymns are found in our Psalmbooks.
>
> 3. That the aforementioned 52 hymns can stand the test of God's Word.
>
> 4. That the history of these hymns is significant. They did not arise from a "hymn spirit" but from the necessity of the circumstances.
>
> 5. Hereby neither Scripture nor the Church Order of Dort is transgressed. The Synod of the T. R. P. D. Church itself decided in 1829 not to introduce any new hymns.[53]

The Synod was cautious in accepting this advice, lest the use of hymns spread to other churches. It decided:

> The Synod approves the action of the committee in the matter of union with the T. R. P. D. Church, with this understanding, that they shall be permitted the use of the 52 hymns in connection with the use of the Heidelberg Catechism, but that no hymns may be introduced into Dutch or German speaking congregations.[54]

A protest was made against this decision, pointing out that hymns were thus permitted to all congregations as soon as they adopted the

49. Minutes of Classis Holland 1848-1858, p. 242.
50. De Wachter, Vol. XI, no. 5 (May 23, 1878), p. 3.
51. Ibid.
52. De Wachter, Vol. XVI, no. 24 (August 30, 1883), p. 2.
53. Acts of Synod, 1890, pp. 45 f.
54. Ibid., p. 14.

use of the English language.[55] The answer to this protest seemed to manifest an utter blindness to the potential reality of the situation which it envisaged.[56] As a matter of fact, the German-speaking congregations had already received permission to use certain hymns. This permission is of less actual significance than that to Classis Hackensack, since the German language declined while the English spread. But it does indicate that even as early as 1883 hymns were not considered absolutely contraband.[57]

The Christian Reformed Church co-operated in attempts to improve the versions of the Psalms for singing in English services. A member representing the Christian Reformed Church was appointed to the revision committee in 1900.[58] His successor, appointed in 1902,[59] wrote articles explaining the work of the committee[60] and reflecting the status of Psalm-singing in the major Reformed Churches of America.[61]

The official introduction of hymns into the worship of the Christian Reformed Church required a revision of the Church Order. Article 69 of the Church Order had provided for the singing of "the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the Sermon as well as the 150 Psalms of David."[62] As early as 1922 it was recognized that other hymns were being used in the worship of certain congregations, and the impossibility of enforcing uniformity under the existing conditions was acknowledged. The permission of the use of hymns to Classis Hackensack and Classis Ostfriesland (German congregations) had opened the way for the use of hymns. Synod deemed it impossible to forbid those

55. Acts of Synod, 1890, pp. 19-21.

56. "The delegates from Spring Street base their protest upon the assumption that by this union the introduction of hymns is adopted in principle; but the officers are constrained to explain that the Synod, by excluding the Dutch and German speaking congregations, desires specifically to avoid the introduction of hymns.
Moreover there were four other names on this protest, of men who seem to have no business making a protest to Synod, wherefore the officers feel compelled to reject those names."
Ibid., p. 21.

57. A minister was permitted to organize Christian Reformed congregations among the German immigrants, permitting them the continued use of their German hymns.
Acts of Synod, 1883, p. 10; Acts of Synod, 1884, pp. 7, 8, 23.

58. Acts of Synod, 1900, p. 69.

59. Acts of Synod, 1902, p. 76.

60. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. VII (June, 1900), pp. 263-266.

61. De Gereformeerde Amerikaan, Vol. XVII (1913), pp. 354 ff., 433 ff., 488.

62. Quoted in the Agenda for Synod, 1928, p. xxix.

churches the use of hymns, since the permission to use them was included in the conditions upon which they joined the Christian Reformed Church.[63]

Important decisions leading to the introduction of hymns were taken by the Synod of 1928. Various overtures submitted to that Synod represent the arguments of the proponents and opponents of hymns. One well-formulated overture sought to prove that opposition to the introduction of hymns was not a matter of principle. Appeal was first made to Scripture to show that the use of hymns was not forbidden. It was then argued that the Church Order as then formulated acknowledged the principle that certain hymns were permissible, and that the inclusion of more hymns was therefore merely a broadening of that principle. Then Reformed writers were quoted in favor of the permission to use hymns, appeal being made to A. Kuyper, Voetius, and Prof. Heyns. Historical objections to the use of hymns were disposed of:

> One of the reasons why our people were so opposed to hymns in 1834 was that so many of the hymns that were forced upon them were un-Reformed.[64]

The same overture, however, professed great love and respect for the Psalms, and sought provision for their continued use.

Another overture of the same year formulated the objections to the introduction of hymns. The predominant objection was the fear that the introduction of hymns would eventually lead to a complete neglect of the Psalms. A lesser objection pointed to the "leaven of Arminianism" in the great majority of existing hymns in the English language, and warned of potential corruption of doctrine if their use were permitted.[65]

The Synod of 1928, recognizing the need for some action in this respect,[66] went on record as not opposing the introduction of hymns on principle. It was felt, however, that practical and historical objections dictated a cautious procedure, and accordingly a committee was appointed to make a careful study of the hymn question.[67] That com-

63. Ibid., p. xxxiii.

64. Ibid., pp. xxviii-xxxi.

65. Ibid., p. xxxiii.

66. "There is need for definite action. Our people are using hymns. Our churches in some localities sing hymns in song services held immediately before the public worship. The demand for hymns has gained great momentum."
Acts of Synod, 1928, pp. 46 f.

67. Ibid., p. 48.

mittee, reporting in 1930, repeated the arguments for hymns previously advanced, and answered some specific objections which had arisen in the meantime.[68] The Synod of 1930 decided to take steps leading to the revision of Church Order Article 69,[69] declared that the use of hymns would not be made compulsory upon the churches,[70] and appointed a committee to recommend suitable hymns to the next synod.[71]

In 1932 the following revision of Church Order Article 69 was adopted:

> In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David and the Collection of Hymns for church use, approved and adopted by Synod, shall be sung. However, while singing of the Psalms in divine worship is a requirement, the use of the approved Hymns is left to the freedom of the churches.[72]

Specific provision was made for the continued use of the Psalms. It was specified that while a separate edition of the present Psalter should be made available, the collection of hymns should not be published apart from the Psalms. Consistories were further urged to "see to it that the memorization of Psalter verses is emphasized in the Catechism and Sunday School classes."[73]

The *Psalter Hymnal* appeared in 1934. It contains 327 metrical versions of the 150 Psalms, 135 hymns, and six "selections for the close of the service." The 413 Psalm versions found in the Psalter previously used were reduced by the elimination of those which were considered unsuitable or undesirable as to poetry and music. Some new selections employing the melodies of the old Dutch Psalms were introduced.[74] The selection of hymns to be included was carefully made. Many familiar hymns were omitted because of objections "from the point of view of fidelity to Scripture, whether in doctrinal or historical accuracy."[75] Several other hymns were revised in part to make them acceptable according to Reformed standards.[76] The Synod of 1934 also granted permission to Dutch-speaking congregations to use the collection of hymns approved by the latest Synod of the Reformed

68. Acts of Synod, 1930, pp. 94-101.
69. Ibid., p. 97.
70. Ibid., p. 98.
71. Ibid., p. 97.
72. Ibid., p. 135.
73. Ibid., p. 136.
74. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1930, pp. 57-60; Acts of Synod, 1932, p. 129.
75. Acts of Synod, 1936, p. 250.
76. Sixteen examples of such revision are given in the Acts of Synod, 1936, pp. 251-253.

Churches in the Netherlands on the grounds that they had been carefully selected by the Dutch churches and that the selection of a separate collection of such hymns by the Christian Reformed Church would be out of the question.[77]

The conservative attitude of the Christian Reformed Church is clearly illustrated in these negotiations regarding hymns. It was amply argued that there were no principle objections on grounds of Scripture or Reformed liturgy to the use of hymns in worship. Care was exercised to avoid the objections on the basis of which hymns had been opposed in the past history of the church. Steps were taken to preserve the use of the Psalms as the principal part of Christian Reformed singing, and it was specifically provided in the revision of the Church Order that no church which was reluctant to use the approved hymns should be forced to employ them. The doctrinal content and implications of the approved hymns was subjected to close scrutiny.

Choir singing has made a gradual advance in the Christian Reformed churches. The Synod of 1904 opposed the use of choirs, with the qualification that this opposition referred not to choirs employed to lead the congregation in singing, but to choirs which sang alone.[78] The Synod of 1926 declined to make a more specific prohibition of choir singing. It chose rather to reaffirm the stand of the Synod of 1904 and declare, "that although it would discourage the introduction of choir singing in public worship (except as an aid to congregational singing) it leaves the final decision with regard to this question to the local consistories."[79] The most recent decision on this matter, adopted by the Synod of 1930, is as follows:

> Though the introduction of choir singing is left to the discretion of the consistory, Synod nevertheless discourages choir singing as a distinct element of public worship on the following grounds;
>
> (1) The danger exists that congregational singing shall be curtailed.
>
> (2) If the choir sings separately there is the difficulty of maintaining the principle of Article 69 of the Church Order.
>
> In cases where choirs exist or shall be introduced, Synod insists that only those Psalms or hymns shall be sung which are approved by Art. 69 of our Church Order; or such anthems which contain only exact words of portions of Scripture.[80]

77. Acts of Synod, 1934, pp. 147 f.
78. Acts of Synod, 1904, pp. 41 f.
79. Acts of Synod, 1926, pp. 69 f.
80. Acts of Synod, 1930, p. 101.

The opposition to choirs is based partly on the grounds that they are an American innovation. The question whether choirs improve congregational singing or ruin it is still a matter of considerable difference of opinion among members of the Christian Reformed Church. Generally speaking, however, choirs are advancing rather than declining in favor.

The polity of the Christian Reformed Church is formulated in the Christian Reformed Church Order. This collection of rules is a direct descendant of the Church Order approved by the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619. Synodical gatherings of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands laid down rules of procedure, beginning at Antwerp in 1563. The "Convent of Wesel" in 1568 and the Synod of Emden in 1571 were particularly active in formulating such rules. These rules were revised and adopted by the Synod of Dort, an action by which the "Church Order of Dort" became normative for the Reformed Churches in Holland. This Church Order, ignored to a large extent in the reorganization of the Dutch Church in 1816, was revived by the leaders of the Secession of 1834.[81] This order was accepted by the immigrants in Western Michigan.[82]

The Church Order as established by the Synod of Dort has remained basically unchanged to the present. The leaders of the Secession of 1834 eliminated "things pertaining to the civil government's interference and other obsolete matters."[83] Within the Christian Reformed Church itself, some revision of this Church Order was requested in 1906[84] and approved in 1914.[85] The request for revision was based upon the observation that there were "various matters in the Church Order which were not in agreement with synodical decisions." Dr. Beets considers the revision an attempt to bring the Church Order "closer to American life."[86] In all probability the fact that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands had revised the Church Order in 1905[87] also influenced the Christian Reformed Church in the direction of revision. The changes were relatively minor, and did not basically

81. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church (1923 edition), p. 238.
82. Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, p. 23.
83. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church, (1923 edition), p. 236.
84. Acts of Synod, 1906, p. 21.
85. Acts of Synod, 1914, pp. 44-72.
86. Beets, The Christian Reformed Church (1923 edition), p. 240.
87. Cf. Acts of Synod, 1914, pp. 45 f.

alter the traditional order.[88] Other minor changes have been made from time to time. The revision of Article 69 to include the singing of hymns in worship services has been previously noted. At present the elimination of Article 70, providing for the solemnization of marriage "in the presence of Christ's Church" is under discussion.[89]

The Church Order as now constituted contains 86 articles, in four major divisions. The first article is a general introduction of the subject of proper order in the churches. The offices are treated in articles 2 to 28; the ecclesiastical assemblies in articles 29 to 52; the doctrines, sacraments, and ceremonies in articles 53 to 70; and censure and ecclesiastical admonition in articles 71 to 86.[90] We shall single out matters of special interest for comment.

Certain matters pertaining to the ministerial office are worthy of mention. Until 1937, theological students were declared candidates for the ministry after an examination by the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary.[91] In 1937, however, it was decided that this examination should be conducted by the Synod itself. The decision to make this change mentioned the principle that this responsibilty of the assemblies should not be delegated if that could be avoided. It was also felt to be desirable that the eldership should have some voice in this essential work.[92]

In the call of a minister, Articles 4 and 5 stipulate that he shall be elected by the Consistory of a vacant church, subject to approval by the congregation. In actual practice, the procedure is somewhat different. The consistory makes a nomination, usually of three ministers or candidates. After this trio has been publicly announced, the congregation elects one of the trio to receive the call. The call is then extended in the name of the consistory.[93] Perhaps this innovation is another indication of the influence of the democratic American environment upon the church. The classis is represented at such congregational

88. E.g. an article regulating the formation of the Consistory provided for the addition of deacons to the Consistory in case the elders numbered three or less; an article providing for the regulation of mission matters by a mission order was inserted to take the place of another obsolete article.
Cf. Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma, The Church Order Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1939), pp. 165, 217.

89. Acts of Synod, 1947, p. 47.

90. These articles are contained in full in Schaver, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 39-57.

91. Van Dellen and Monsma, op. cit., p. 26.

92. Acts of Synod, 1937, p. 37.

93. Cf. discussion of this discrepancy in Van Dellen and Monsma, op. cit., pp. 23 f.

meetings through the counsellor of the vacant church, without whose approval no call may be extended. There is no solicitation of calls within the Christian Reformed Church.[94] There is no committee on pastoral settlement to which a minister or congregation may apply if a change is desired. A recent writer comments unfavorably on this situation in discussing the problem of long pastorates.[95]

The presbyterian principle of the equality of ministers is maintained in the Christian Reformed Church. Calvin desired that "every one may be content within his own limits, and not invade the province of another."[96] The Church Order states in Article 17:

> Among the Ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and also in other matters as far as possible according to the judgment of the Consistory, and if necessary, of the Classis; which equality shall also be maintained in the case of the Elders and the Deacons.[97]

A further safeguard against hierarchy is found in the definite provision for retirement of elders and deacons, expressed in Article 27. That article advises that officers shall not be immediately eligible for re-election upon retirement. But the further provision is made that the circumstances of the church may validate re-election in some cases.[98]

The assemblies designated by the Church Order are the consistories, the classes, and the general synod. Provision is also made for particular synods in case the need for such bodies should arise.[99] The local church is viewed as a complete manifestation of the Body of Christ in itself,[100] and the local consistory is therefore considered the basic unit of government.[101] Consistorial authority extends even to the discipline of ministers, although the advice of Classis and the consent of the

94. "Any solicitation of a call would be condemned most severely . . . Outright applications for calls are unknown among us."
Ibid., p. 34.

95. Schaver, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 116-123.

96. Calvin, op. cit., Bk. IV, chap. III, sec. vii (Vol. II, p. 323).

97. Cf. Schaver, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 43.

98. Arguments for and against "definite retirement" are advanced in Van Dellen and Monsma, op. cit., pp. 125 f.

99. Cf. Church Order, Article 29.

100. "That in this universal Church are comprehended particular churches, . . . and that each of these respectively is justly distinguished by the name and authority of a church."
Calvin, op. cit., Bk. IV, Ch. I, sec. ix (Vol. II, p. 281).

101. "In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common."
Christian Reformed Church Order, Art. 30.

synodical delegates is required for final deposition. Article 79 of the Church Order states:

> When ministers of the divine Word, elders or deacons, have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the Church, or worthy of punishment by the authorities, the elders and deacons shall immediately, by preceding sentence of the Consistory thereof and of the nearest church, be suspended or expelled from their office, but the ministers shall only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office shall be subject to the judgment of the Classis, with the advice of the delegates of the (Particular) Synod mentioned in Art. 11.[102]

Since Christ governs His Church through the local office bearers, the congregational meetings have no real authority of their own. They "are really Consistory meetings to which all male members in full and regular standing have been invited, in order that certain definite matters may be considered under the direction of the Consistory . . . they are deliberative gatherings, called together by the Consistory."[103] The provision for election of elders even leaves room for self-perpetuation by the Consistory, with only token consultation of the congregation. This provision, however, has become a dead letter.[104]

In keeping with the assertion that major assemblies should deal only with such matters as "could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common," the classes are in duty bound to leave to the consistories everything which is not beyond their ability or jurisdiction. Some measure of supervision is provided for, in keeping with the views of Calvin.[105] Each church is to be examined at each classical meeting:

> Furthermore, the president shall, among other things, put the following questions to the delegates of each church: (1) Are the Consistory meetings held in your church? (2) Is church discipline exercised? (3) Are the poor cared for? (4) Does the Consistory support the cause of Christian schools? (5) Do you need the judgment and help of the Classis for the proper government of your church?[106]

Provision is also made for church visitation, an annual visit to each church of the classis by two of the most experienced ministers of the classis. At these visits a searching inquiry is made into the manner

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102. Schaver, op. cit., p. 55.

103. Van Dellen and Monsma, op. cit., p. 169.

104. Schaver, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 105.

105. "For, to prevent imposture from deceiving us, under the name of the Church, every congregation assuming this name should be brought to the proof, like gold to the touchstone."
Calvin, op. cit., Bk. IV, Ch. I, sec. xi (Vol. II, p. 284).

106. Cf. Christian Reformed Church Order, Art. 41.

in which the business of the church is conducted, and advice and admonition are offered.[107] On one occasion, a classis went so far as to depose a consistory,[108] following a precedent dating from the time of the Synod of Dort.[109] It should be remarked, however, that this action took place only after the legal election of a local consistory had been disputed, and a hopelessly confused situation had resulted in the congregation concerned.

The (general) synod of the Christian Reformed Church met annually from 1869 to 1884; biennially from 1884 to 1936; and has met annually again since 1936.[110] Originally each congregation sent delegates to synod. Since 1883 delegation has been by classis, and since 1936 each classis has delegated two ministers and two elders to each synod.[111] Representation in synod is thus not in direct proportion to the size of the classes. But on the other hand, the attempt is continuously made to keep the various classes approximately equal in size.

The nature of the authority of the major assemblies over minor assemblies has been described as follows: it is derived, and not original; limited, and not general; smaller in measure, and not higher in degree; ministering, and not compelling; conditional, and not unconditional.[112] It is stated on the one hand that major assemblies cannot force minor assemblies to enforce and execute their decisions. But on the other hand, the minor assembly should submit, pending decision on its appeal. If the judgment on the appeal is negative, submission of the minor assembly should follow unless great conscientious objections should make withdrawal from the denomination preferable.[113] The complaint is sometimes made that the minor assemblies are lax in applying the decisions of synod. It may be that this is a faint echo of the independentism which Wyckoff thought to have found among the immigrants.[114] Perhaps the influence of the rebellion against the State-dominated church boards in the Netherlands is still felt, and misapplied to genuine ecclesiastical authority. While something of

107. Ibid., Art. 44.
108. Acts of Synod, 1926, p. 142.
109. Schaver, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 128.
110. Ibid., pp. 130 f.
111. Ibid., pp. 132-134.
112. Van Dellen and Monsma, op. cit., p. 162.
113. Ibid.
114. Cf. Wyckoff's report, Supra, p. 27.

this situation does exist, however, it should be ascribed to laxity rather than to deliberate insubordination, and can hardly be described as a serious infraction of the principles of Reformed polity.

A recent writer has subjected the Christian Reformed Church Order to sweeping criticisms regarding confusion of matters which ought to be clearly defined, needless multiplication of decisions and alterations, and uncertainty on some basic problems.[115] The same writer states that "the adherents of presbyterian polity should try more zealously to improve their polity."[116] Without passing judgment on the validity of these criticisms and suggestions, we should remark that the Christian Reformed Church is manifestly more interested in doctrine than in polity, liturgy, or history. The strict and determined adherence to doctrinal orthodoxy has led in some measure to a disregard of the progress and development which the Church ought to foster. There is a praiseworthy desire to "hold fast to that which is good," but a somewhat lesser readiness to "prove all things."

For an understanding of the position of the Christian Reformed Church it is necessary finally to consider the idea of the Church as held by the denomination. The trend of thought in this respect is decidedly orthodox and conservative. The idea of the Church will be seen against the dual background of the historical antecedents of the Christian Reformed Church and its modern environment. The conscious aim of the denomination has been to adhere to the pattern of the Church as laid down in Scripture, viewed as infallibly inspired. A subordinate aim has been to maintain the traditions of orthodox Dutch theology on this score. Meanwhile modern ecumenical discussions of the idea of the Church have been either ignored or criticized, although modern ethical and social emphases have brought about some changes in the attitude of the Christian Reformed Church to some elements of its task.

Dr. Charles Hodge represents the historic Reformed position in appealing directly to Scripture for information on the idea of the Church. His specific starting point is in the Apostles' Creed, in which the believer professes to believe " a holy, catholic Church, the communion of saints." Hodge says:

115. Schaver, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 61.
116. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 58.

> The Church . . . is not a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy. It may be either, or all, or neither.[117]

The determinative questions are, "Who are the saints and what is the nature of their communion?"[118] He answers that the saints are those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and the bond of unity is their relationship to Christ through the Holy Spirit.[119] The Church is therefore composed of those who are effectually called and separated from the world.[120]

Christian Reformed utterances on doctrine, polity, and liturgy echo this position. Both the Church Order and the Formula of Subscription make the Word of God the final court of appeal. Likewise, the Belgic Confession declares the Holy Scriptures to be quite sufficient as the only rule of faith. The Form for Baptism of Infants in use in the Christian Reformed Church specifically views the children of believers as sanctified in Christ, and therefore members of His Church. The Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper describes the unity of Christians as constituted in their relationship to Christ through the Holy Spirit.[121]

A similar adherence to the Calvinistic pattern is seen in the description of the marks of the true Church. Calvin clearly makes the preaching of the gospel the primary task of the Church. In the very beginning of his chapter on "The True Church, and the Necessity of Our Union with Her, Being the Mother of all the Pious," he states:

> . . . and that the preaching of the gospel might be maintained, he has deposited this treasure with the Church.[122]

He elaborates upon this theme in the fifth section of the same chapter:

> Isaiah had long before described the kingdom of Christ by this character; "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth and forever." . . . It is God who inspires us with faith, but it is through the instrumentality of the gospel, according to the declarations of Paul, "that faith cometh by hearing." So also the power to save resides in God, but,

117. Charles Hodge, **Discussions in Church Polity**, selected and arranged by the Rev. William Durant (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1878), p. 5.

118. Ibid., p. 6.

119. Ibid., pp. 6 f.

120. Ibid., p. 12.

121. Cf. Psalter Hymnal, supplement containing the doctrinal standards and liturgy of the Christian Reformed Church, pp. 4, 84, 92.

122. Calvin, op. cit., Bk. IV, Ch. I, sec. i (Vol. II, p. 269).

as the same apostle testifies in another place, he displays it in the preaching of the gospel. . . . That we may know, therefore, that we have an inestimable treasure communicated to us in earthen vessels, God himself comes forward, and as he is the Author of this arrangement, so he will be acknowledged as present in his institution.[123]

This attitude is reflected in the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church. The Belgic Confession makes the preaching of the gospel the first mark of the true Church:

The marks by which the true Church is known are these; If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; . . .[124]

The Heidelberg Catechism is even more explicit:

Q. What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven?
A. The preaching of the holy gospel and church discipline or excommunication out of the Christian Church. By these two the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut against unbelievers.
Q. How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the gospel?
A. By proclaiming and openly witnessing, according to the command of Christ, to believers, one and all, that, whenever they receive the promises of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God for the sake of Christ's merits; and on the contrary, by proclaiming and witnessing to all unbelievers and such as do not sincerely repent that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation abide on them so long as they are not converted. According to this witness of the gospel God will judge, both in this life and in that which is to come.[125]

Our most important consideration, however, is the present adherence of the Christian Reformed Church to this position. Responding to a request for more direct ecclesiastical intervention in labor questions, the Synod of 1943 stated:

What brother ———— asks can hardly be considered as partaking of the task of the Church. The primary task of the Church is to preach the Word. The Ministry has the duty of instructing, exhorting, admonishing on the basis of the principles of the Word of God, as well with reference to the social spheres of life as to others. . . . It is the task of the Church to declare the principles of the Bible which shall obtain in the social spheres, but it is the duty of various organizations to apply these principles.[126]

Other utterances are less official, but equally revealing:

That Church is called in Scripture the pillar and ground of the truth. To it the Word of God has been committed for translation, for interpretation, and for defense. The Church has both the right and duty to interpret that Word and its Creed.[127]
The responsibility of the Church is to teach man about God and about himself.[128]

123. Ibid., sec. v (Vol. II, pp. 274 f.).
124. Belgic Confession, Art. XXIX.
125. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XXXI, Question 83, 84.
126. Acts of Synod, 1943, p. 401.
127. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (May 2, 1947), p. 548.
128. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (May 31, 1946), p. 683.

> They (the Modernists) do not believe in gaining adherents by preaching the Word of God, but by presenting to them the wisdom of man, as it is manifested in the changing dicta of science or in the philosophy of the day, and therefore cannot address the people with a "thus saith the Lord."[129]

Calvin makes the proper administration of the sacraments the second mark of the true Church:

> For wherever we find the word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there, it is not to be doubted, is a Church of God.[130]

He stressed the fact that the Lord's Supper could be truly received only by believers, and that great dangers attended careless participation:

> Surely they will not dare to deny that the bread represents the body of Christ. Hence it follows that the reprobate are excluded from the participation of it.[131]

> Now as we perceive this sacred bread of the Lord's Supper to be spiritual food, grateful and delicious as well as salutary to the sincere worshippers of God, . . . so, on the contrary, it is changed into a most noxious poison to all whose faith it does not nourish and confirm.[132]

This guarding of the sacraments is clearly reflected in the Heidelberg Catechism.[133] The Christian Reformed Church Order circumscribes both the administration[134] and the reception of the sacraments:

> None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who according to the usage of the Church with which they unite themselves have made a confession of the Reformed religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly walk, without which also those who come from other Churches shall not be admitted.[135]

This article embodies the principle of closed communion, to which the Christian Reformed Church has faithfully held.

The Belgic Confession adds a third mark of the Church, in ecclesiastical discipline:

> The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if it maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin.[136]

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129. Ibid., (April 5, 1946), p. 425.

130. Calvin, op. cit., Bk. IV, Ch. I, sec. ix (Vol. II, p. 281).

131. Ibid., Ch. XVII, sec. xxxiv (Vol. II, p. 692).
Cf. also, "And, indeed, if Churches be well regulated, they will not suffer persons of abandoned characters among them, nor will they promiscuously admit the worthy and unworthy to that sacred supper."
Ibid., Ch. I, sec. xv (Vol. II, p. 288).

132. Ibid., Ch. XVII, sec. xl (Vol. II, pp. 698 f.).

133. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XXX, Question 81 f.

134. "Likewise no one shall be permitted to preach or administer the sacraments in another church without the consent of the consistory of that church." Christian Reformed Church Order, Art. 15.

135. Ibid., Art. 61.

136. Belgic Confession, Art. XXIX.

Calvin also gave this exercise large place in his system. He indicates the importance of it at the outset of his discussion of the subject:

> As the saving doctrine of Christ is the soul of the Church, so discipline forms the ligaments which connect the members together, and keep each in its proper place. Whoever, therefore, either desire the abolition of all discipline, or obstruct its restoration, whether they act from design or inadvertently, they certainly promote the entire dissolution of the Church.[137]

The Heidelberg Catechism calls discipline one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven[138] and the Church Order makes ample provision for its exercise.[139] Again, however, the most important consideration is the present fidelity of the church to these principles. No general figures on discipline or excommunication are available. The *Yearbook*, however, lists 234 members who resigned, were excommunicated, or erased in the year 1946.[140] Although the numbers involved range from a low of two in three classes to a high of twenty-six in another classis, there is no classis with no disciplinary action recorded. These figures will serve to indicate that discipline is not a dead letter in the Christian Reformed Church.[141]

Implicit in the above considerations is a divinely given authority to which Calvin does not fail to give explicit expression. The Church speaks and acts in the name of God:

> For so highly does the Lord esteem the communion of his Church, that he considers every one as a traitor and apostate from religion, who perversely withdraws himself from any Christian society which preserves the true ministry of the word and sacraments. He commends the authority of the Church, in such a manner as to account every violation of it an infringement of his own. For it is not a trivial circumstance, that the Church is called "the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth."[142]

That authority is vested in ministers of the gospel:

> We see the means expressed: the preaching of the heavenly doctrine is assigned to the pastors. We see that all are placed under the same regulation, in order that they may submit themselves with gentleness and docility of mind to be governed by the pastors who are appointed for this purpose.[143]

This authority, based upon the Word, concerns such spiritual matters as the forgiveness of sins:

> In the communion of saints, therefore, sins are continually remitted to us by the ministry of the Church, when the presbyters or bishops, to

137. Calvin, op. cit., Bk. IV, Ch. XII, sec. i (Vol. II, pp. 503 f.).
138. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XXXI.
139. Christian Reformed Church Order, Arts. 71-81.
140. The figure in 1945 was 193; in 1944, 212.
141. Yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church, 1947, pp. 7-25.
142. Calvin, op. cit., Bk. IV, Ch. I, sec. x (Vol. II, pp. 282 f.).
143. Ibid., sec. v (p. 274).

> whom this office is committed, confirm pious consciences by the promises of the gospel, in the hope of pardon and remission; and that as well publicly as privately, according as necessity requires.[144]

Christian Reformed utterances are thoroughly in accord with those of Calvin on this score. We illustrate with two quotations from recent articles:

> The Church to which we belong is divinely instituted, divinely owned, and divinely guided. May familiarity never blind us to the real glory and prestige of the work and grace of God in her.[145]
>
> Church tolerance also finds a limit in the ordinances of ecclesiastical authority. The Church of Jesus Christ is a divine institution and is in duty bound to maintain itself. It is called a pillar and ground of the truth. Every Church has the sacred duty to preserve that truth, to maintain it, to defend it, and to propagate it. It may not compel people in any way to accept its teachings, but it has the perfect right to expect of its members that they adhere to its teachings and do not dishonor the Church by an ungodly life.[146]

The above citations have merely shown a continuation of Calvin's ideas on certain points, and left the variance from modern ideas of the Church to be inferred. That the Christian Reformed Church is critical of some of those ideas is sometimes explicitly stated. Spokesmen for the Christian Reformed Church are sharply critical of modern ecclesiastical preoccupation with social concern. We cite several critical utterances:

> After the liberal Church had run the whole gamut of its denials, it found it rather difficult to find any real specific place for the Church alongside of all kinds of other social organizations. . . . As a matter of fact, she had lost her message, and therefore had to discover some new function. The social gospel was discovered, and was for a time regarded as a good substitute, but the experiences of the last quarter of a century have clearly stamped it as a very dubious substitute.[147]

Commenting upon the National Council of Community Churches, another writer says:

> With this statement of purpose in the place of a declaration of faith, the organization would appear to be a society for social reform, rather than the company of believers. But to put into practice the will of God in community life requires fundamental convictions as to what the will of God is.[148]

Practical manifestations of social concern, for the Christian Reformed Church, are Kingdom rather than Church activities. There is

144. Ibid., sec. xxii (p. 295).
145. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (June 20, 1947), p. 768.
146. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (June 7, 1946), p. 713.
147. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (January 31, 1947), p. 137.
148. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (June 28, 1946), p. 808.

a close relationship between the Church and the Kingdom, but the two are not to be identified with each other:

> The Kingdom is broader than the Church. The former is the wheel — hub, spokes, and rim — the latter is only the hub from which the spokes radiate. The visible Church is one of many organizations; the Kingdom of God is found in the home, the school, the hospital, the laboratory, the office, the shop, the court, the legislative hall — everywhere, in all human affairs, *in so far* as Christians are doing the will of God in those areas of human endeavor.
>
> The Modernist divorces the Church and the Kingdom of God. He fails to see that the Kingdom can exist only among those who are born again.[149]

The Church rather gives guidance to Kingdom activities as a part of her task which is incidental to the preaching of the gospel:

> The religion which she seeks to promote does indeed bear on the present life, but it is nevertheless fundamentally other-worldly.[150]

This task is to be accomplished through a social thrust in the preaching of the Church, through catechetical instruction, evangelization for its apostate members, and even through the work of the deacons.[151] It is plain that the Christian Reformed Church desires to make and keep the redemption of society subordinate to the salvation of the individual.

A similar reluctance to subscribe wholeheartedly to modern ideas is evidenced with respect to the thorny problem of the unity of the Church. Calvin distinguished between the visible and the invisible Church, and, while mourning the disunity of the visible Church, maintained that the invisible Church was truly one.[152] Any unity among the visible branches of the Church must be based upon common belief:

> But it is also to be remarked, that this union of affection is dependent upon the unity of the faith, as its foundation, end, and rule.[153]
>
> There is but one Church, which is widely extended into a multitude by the offspring of its fertility; just as there are many rays of the sun, but the light is one; . . . And when many rivers issue from one source, though by its exuberant abundance the stream is multiplied into numerous currents, yet the unity of the fountain still remains. . . . Cut off a river from its source, and it immediately dries up. . . . No representation could be more elegant to express that inseparable connection which subsists between all the members of Christ.[154]

149. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (January 17, 1947), p. 68.
150. Ibid., (January 31, 1947), p. 137.
151. Ibid., (May 23, 1947), p. 646.
152. "Therefore, though the melancholy desolation which surrounds us seems to proclaim that there is nothing left of the Church, let us remember that the death of Christ is fruitful, and that God wonderfully preserves his Church, as it were in hiding places." Calvin, op. cit., Bk. IV, Ch. I, sec. ii (Vol. II, pp. 271 f.).
153. Ibid., sec. v (p. 308).
154. Ibid., sec. vi (p. 309).

Thus Hodge also makes the essential unity of the Church an inward and spiritual entity, and considers the external organization of the Church important, but not essential to its true unity.[155] He describes the essential unity of the Church as threefold:

> The unity of the Church is threefold. 1. Spiritual; the unity of faith and of communion. 2. Comprehensive; the Church is one as it is catholic, embracing all the people of God. 3. Historical; it is the same Church in all ages. In all these senses, the Church considered as the communion of saints, is one; in no one of these senses can unity be predicated of the Church as visible.[156]

Hodge further agrees with Calvin in making the prerequisite for union a genuine agreement in doctrine and spirit.[157]

The Christian Reformed Church, likewise, recognizes the ideal unity of the Church of Christ, but maintains that such unity in the visible Church can come only on the foundation of a common faith. Utterances upon this subject are both frequent and explicit. Defending the continued existence of denominations, one writer says:

> The Church cannot hope to attain even to a perfect *spiritual* unity in this sinful world, any more than a Christian can expect to reach perfection in this life. And if this is so, how can she ever anticipate a complete expression of her unity in a world in which the divisive influence of sin is always operative? She must indeed continue to strive for a greater measure of external unity, but it must be based on the truth revealed in the Word of God.[158]

The criticism of some union sentiment is sharp, to say the least:

> Real Modernists are not Christian, but pagan in their conception of the truth, and therefore can never hope to constitute a Christian Church. From this it follows that a union of modernistic Churches would in the end turn out to be no Church at all. It would prove to be a mere mirage.[159]

The basic difficulty is the sin which remains in the Church:

> It remains true therefore that in ideal surroundings the Church would be one organizationally as well as spiritually. But it is a dangerous procedure to attempt the realization of an ideal church formation while sin is still present in the Church.[160]

The defense of denominationalism over against Protestant union is summed up by the editor of *The Banner:*

> Did God not create one world, one humanity, and do we not profess to be believers in one universal Church? That would seem to be the obvious answer to our fears. But the fallacy at the root of this entire

155. Hodge, op. cit., pp. 5 f.
156. Ibid., p. 22.
157. Ibid., pp. 93-96.
158. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (April 12, 1946), p. 457.
159. Ibid., (April 5, 1946), p. 425.
160. Ibid., (August 30, 1946), p. 1004.

> movement for church union regardless of important differences is exposed by Pastor Guiton in the following sentence; "It is plainer than ever that the Roman Church considers with deep sympathy the policy of Protestant unification; they say that Protestants have at last adopted the Roman doctrine of *the Visibility of the Universal Church* and that a unified Protestantism is sure to submit one day to the Pope, the only means of establishing one Christian Church on earth." We Protestants must defend with might and main the Reformed doctrine that the Church of Christ is invisible in its essence and that lack of unity in its visible form in no wise cancels its essential unity. The external division of the Church, though inconceivable in a perfect world, is the only safeguard against the corruption of all its parts. Error spreads like a forest fire. The plough of external divisions in the Church has often raised up an effective barrier against the conflagration.[161]

Christian Reformed spokesmen take the same militant attitude toward the world in which the Church is found, in utterances which imply some criticism of modern ideas of the Church on this score also.[162] A recognized leader within the Christian Reformed Church writes as follows:

> The Church has the sacred duty to take position over against the world. It must always guard against being conformed to the world, and must rather seek to be transformed ever increasingly by the operation of the Holy Spirit. This calls for eternal vigilance and for constant warfare with the evil world. But alas! during the last half a century the Church has given but little evidence of its militant character. It made a compact with the world, and allowed it to enter its portals. Instead of going forward under the guidance of Jesus Christ, the King of the Church, it took orders from science and philosophy and human culture. The inevitable result was the secularization of the Church, and this in turn led to its present anemic condition, its lack of real spiritual power. How the pure gold has grown dim![163]

The true Church is in this world, but not of it, and both facts are significant:

> Only then are we acting responsibly when we neither withdraw ourselves nor let ourselves drift. The Church must manifest itself as the Church of Jesus Christ, the Church against the world.[164]

The Church in general is viewed as already secularized:

> The secularized Church cannot be identified with the "Jerusalem which is above." It is of this world, and worldly. It has spurned its birthright and, though a beehive of social activity, is on the way to becoming a spiritual corpse.[165]

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161. Ibid., (July 5, 1946), p. 856.
The "Pastor Guiton" who is mentioned is a French Methodist minister of Paris.

162. On the distinction between Christian believers and the world, cf. Hodge, op. cit., pp. 56 f.

163. L. Berkhof, "The Church Against the World," in The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (June 6, 1947), p. 711.

164. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (May 31, 1946), p. 683.

165. Ibid., (November 29, 1946), p. 1397.

The warning against secularization is extended also to the individual members of the Christian Reformed Church:

> One of the most dangerous forms of worldliness is the fraternization of Christian people with worldly men and women. . . . How pathetic when confessing members of the Church belong to organizations which sponsor bridge parties, theater parties, floor shows, dinner dances, etc. . . . Contacts with worldly people are unavoidable and necessary; friendship with them is a dishonor to Christ and a great spiritual hazard.[166]

The idea of the Church which is held by the Christian Reformed denomination is thus nothing new. It is rather distinguished by being something quite old. When the authority, constitution, function, and purpose of the Church are considered, the Christian Reformed denomination considers the views of Calvin, passed down through Reformed tradition in the Netherlands, to be capable of general acceptance today. Without doubt modern conceptions of the social responsibilities of the Church have resulted in a greater appreciation of these responsibilties on the part of the Christian Reformed Church. But the idea that the social task can rightly occupy more than a subordinate position among the Church's duties is vigorously resisted. If the modern situation has had any effect upon the conception of the unity of the Church, it has been to make the stress upon the identification of that unity with the invisible Church the stronger. The Christian Reformed Church considers itself a part of the Church militant, and its declaration of war is against the secularization and uncritical union of the Church as well as against the world. It need only be added that if there is any considerable dissent from this position within the Christian Reformed Church, it has not to this time become vocal.

We have made particular comparison of the doctrine, polity, worship, and idea of the Church in the Christian Reformed system with these elements in Reformed tradition. When we compare the Christian Reformed position with pristine Calvinism in these particulars, we find a general adherence to the Calvinistic pattern, with some minor changes. Some of these changes have come by way of Netherlands theology. The doctrinal standards of the church are not Calvin's own work, but the standards of the Dutch Reformed Churches. The emphasis upon the Covenant doctrine is more predominant in the Christian Reformed system than in Calvin's. The position regarding

166. Ibid., (December 20, 1946), p. 1492.

baptism and regeneration which is reflected in the Conclusions of Utrecht are a heritage from Dutch theology.

Other minor alterations in the general Calvinistic pattern were inevitable due to the situation of the Christian Reformed Church in the United States. The change in the Belgic Confession due to the separation of Church and State has been described. Other alterations which have been made in the Church Order have also been mentioned. The opposition to Arminianism, which was inherited from the Synod of Dort, has come to frequent expression in the church's history. The opponent against whom Calvin characteristically wrote was the Roman Catholic Church. The Christian Reformed Church finds its adversaries more characteristically in this Arminianism or in what the denomination considers an apostate Protestantism.

In the course of the years, some decay is also inevitable. Something of the very secularism which the Christian Reformed Church opposes so outspokenly has crept into the church, in an almost imperceptible fashion. Little if any of it can be seen in the official doctrine, polity, or general utterances of the church. But leaders at various times have complained of the fact that the rank and file of Christian Reformed membership are less well acquainted with the Reformed standards and the position of the church than were their fathers. We quote a recent article:

> There must be a revival of interest in the study of the Word of God and Reformed truth. It will have to begin with the individual. If we are willing to place study of the Word ahead of sports and entertainment, so that we can meet weekly (in this case, the meetings are those of the Men's Societies) and then if we attend regularly, under the right kind of leadership, so that the Scriptures will indeed be opened to us, then there is much that can be done. If we are not willing to do that we will drift ever further into a superficiality which will make us an easy prey of humanism, and eventually Modernism.[167]

It is reasonable to suppose that the disappearance of the language isolation would have some effect such as to increase secularization. This supposition has come to clear expression. The writer of a recent article praises the immigrants of 1847 for the vitality of their Calvinism, and then goes on to write as follows:

> However, we are today one hundred years farther advanced in the movement of world history. New generations have arisen which are confronted with new situations out of which have grown new problems. It cannot be denied that our environment is far more complex than that in

167. Federation Messenger, Vol. XIX, no. 1 (September, 1947), p. 32.

> which our forebears lived. The intimate relations which we necessarily sustain to people of all races and creeds in modern economic and social life have not made the calling of living according to the Scriptural rule any easier. Unless we diligently guard the doors of our homes and churches and schools and above all the doors of our own hearts, we will unwittingly lose this spiritual treasure. . . .
>
> Signs of the deterioration of this ideal in our hearts and lives are, to put it as mildly as possible, far from imaginary. Do we still jealously guard the holiness of the name and honor of our God? In our time when vacations are the order of the day do we still have spiritual regard for the Lord's Day? Can we say that our Reformed homes breathe the spirit of piety and sobriety of life? . . .[168]

The fact remains, however, that such secularization as exists has found scanty expression in the official position of the church. It is therefore too early to measure the impact of the environment upon the church in this respect. While warnings are in order, the trend of the future cannot yet be confidently predicted on the basis of the facts now available.

The adherence to pristine Calvinism has been influenced by one more factor, the situation of the Christian Reformed Church in the United States as a minority group. Calvin, in spite of the fact that he held no civil office, wielded a great influence in Geneva. Presbyterianism in Scotland and the Reformed Church in Holland were, to say the least, factors to be reckoned with in national life. The Christian Reformed Church in America has been and is distinctly a minority group. The consciousness of being a minority was the more vivid because of intimate contacts with fellow immigrants who had joined and remained in a larger ecclesiastical body. This has undoubtedly contributed to a denominational solidarity as well as to the ardent conservatism of the church. Unable to appeal to great numbers or great influence as an argument for separate existence, the Christian Reformed Church has been the more ready to think highly of its system and to defend it with true zeal.[169]

* * * * * * * * * *

In its polity, worship, and idea of the Church as well as in its doctrine, the Christian Reformed Church is decidedly conservative. Only such changes have been made as were deemed absolutely necessary and in keeping with the principles of the Word of God and Reformed

168. The Banner, Vol. LXXXII (August 22, 1947), p. 960.

169. "Let us be loyal to the denomination which we regard as the purest manifestation of the Church universal."
Cf. The Banner, Vol. LXXXI (April 12, 1946), p. 457.

tradition. A new order of worship sought to bring the practice of the church closer to the original as seen in the Reformers. Hymn singing was introduced only when it became apparent that there were no principal objections against it. The polity inherited from the Synod of Dort remained substantially unchanged. In the idea of the Church there are many similarities to the position of Calvin in the *Institutes,* and sharp criticism of the distinctively modern ideas on that score. Some changes in the Calvinistic pattern were inevitable, but those changes which have occurred have been minor and have not essentially altered the pattern. In any proposed change, a conscious effort is made to adhere to the pattern.

CONCLUSION

In seeking reasons for the continued orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church, we have singled out seven factors which contributed to that end. We shall now summarize those reasons and evaluate them.

First, the Christian Reformed Church had an orthodox start. The leaders of the two Secessions, 1834 and 1857, were determined to protect the orthodox Dutch Reformed faith from defections in doctrine or in life. This orthodoxy was shared to a full extent by the laymen in the church; it was cherished the more because of the hardships which it carried with it; it was of such a nature as to lead the settlers to prefer separation from all others to any association which might corrupt their doctrine or life. Undoubtedly this influence must be described as decreasing. Appreciation for the views of the founders of the church is in a somewhat inverse proportion to the length of time since those views were expressed. Just at present, however, it must be said that this appreciation is increasing rather than decreasing. For a time it was taken for granted that every member of the church would be well acquainted with the religious heritage of the church. As a result, many members remained ignorant of that heritage without anyone attempting to enlighten them. At present, particularly in observance of the centennial of the Michigan settlements, the heritage is much in evidence. Perhaps the result will be to revitalize the effects of the orthodox start of the church.

Second, the orthodoxy was preserved by an interest in theological discussion. This served on the one hand to crystallize the differences between the Dutch immigrants who remained in the Reformed Church in America and those who left that church in the Secession of 1857. Among the unpleasant results of this influence there remains also the favorable fact that this interest led to a high degree of unanimity of opinion on the part of the members of the Christian Reformed Church. On the other hand, this interest served to make the members of that church keenly conscious of the importance of doctrine and able to some

extent to distinguish the essential from the non-essential and to see the significance of the theological changes which the American environment would presently propose to them. This interest in theological discussion is, by common consent, much less than it formerly was. Although this may be a bad sign in itself, the interest did serve a distinct part in the preservation of orthodoxy at the time it existed.

Third, the orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church was preserved by ecclesiastical action. The church courts were used to ward off the impact of various departures from the orthodox Reformed faith. Very important in this respect is the unanimity of opinion within the Christian Reformed Church. Leaders and laymen alike desire to remain orthodox. This spirit contributed very greatly to the success of the ecclesiastical action which was taken. As long as it exists, such ecclesiastical action will continue to resist any departures from the historic Reformed faith.

The fourth reason for continued orthodoxy was the isolation of the Christian Reformed Church and people. We consider this one of the two most important reasons, the other being the educational system of the church. But this isolation is fast disappearing, if it is not already gone. The only thing remaining of it is an incomplete awareness that the Christian Reformed Church is now an American church. One cannot mourn the passing of this isolation; it could not have continued, and to have attempted to preserve it any longer would have worked to the detriment of the church. But one is forced to wonder what effective means of preserving orthodoxy will arise to take its place.

The fifth reason for continued orthodoxy, which we consider equal in importance to the isolation of the church, is the system of education. Unlike the isolation, this influence is still in full force, and perhaps even increasing in effectiveness. It is in a continual process of adjustment to the American environment, particularly in view of the passing of isolation. But that adjustment is an improvement rather than a retrogression. The problems of the environment are seen with increasing clarity with the passage of the years. From the standpoints of organization, education of its teachers, and physical properties, this influence is growing stronger. In the Christian School it is also extending in a positive attempt to influence the environment. The crucial character of this influence in preserving orthodoxy will increase as time goes by.

The sixth reason for continued orthodoxy is the incentive provided by attempts to influence the environment in a positive way. While isolation continued in full force, this influence could not amount to much. At present it is growing by leaps and bounds. If the orthodoxy of the Christian Reformed Church is preserved in the future, this will emerge as one of the dominant factors in that preservation. With the inevitable change from a defensive to an aggressive attitude toward the environment, the attempt to influence the environment in a positive way must advance to the position of importance formerly held by the isolation of the church.

Finally, the Christian Reformed Church is orthodox today because it has preserved the other parts of the Calvinistic pattern as well as the doctrinal system. That pattern is a unified whole, as is to be expected of the system of a Reformer of Calvin's type. Worship, polity, and doctrine are all based upon the same thoroughgoing understanding and interpretation of the Word of God. They must stand or fall together. This maintenance of the other parts of the pattern may be said to be improving; at least there is more of an awareness of the necessity of consistency today than in previous years. In the present writer's opinion, however, that appreciation stands in need of further improvement. The conservative spirit of the church has led to a preoccupation with doctrine which has contributed to an inability to recognize the necessity of development and progress.

There are those who say that the Christian Reformed Church is merely a few decades behind the other denominations in the loss of its orthodoxy. The perusal of competent histories of the other denominations lends some credence to this theory. The fact remains that the Christian Reformed Church is today an outstanding example of continued orthodoxy. What the future holds in store for it time alone can tell.

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APPENDIX I

Distribution of Christian Reformed Churches by States

State	Number of Congregations	Number of Church Families
Michigan	117	14,794
Iowa	42	3,435
Illinois	23	3,343
Minnesota	22	1,403
New Jersey	18	1,979
California	15	1,151
Canada (all Provinces)	15	485
Washington	13	1,021
Wisconsin	13	856
South Dakota	12	588
Indiana	5	623
New Mexico	5	32
New York	5	232
Ohio	4	240
Colorado	3	390
Montana	3	211
Kansas	2	116
Arizona	1	14
Idaho	1	22
Massachusetts	1	250
North Dakota	1	49
North Carolina	1	25
District of Columbia	1	17
TOTALS	323	31,276

APPENDIX II

Memorable Dates in the History of the Christian Reformed Church

1834 Secession in the Netherlands
1846 (November) Arrival of Dr. Van Raalte in New York City
1850 Union with Reformed Church in America ratified
1857 Secession of 1857 to form Christian Reformed Church in America
1867 First publication of *De Wachter*
1876 First professor of theological school inaugurated
1879 First home missionary installed
1890 Union with Classis Hackensack
1896 First missionaries sent to the Navaho Indians
1908 Adoption of the "Conclusions of Utrecht."
1914 *The Banner* becomes denominational property
1918-1924 Three important doctrinal controversies
1920 National Union of Christian Schools organized
1920 China mission opened
1940 Sudan mission opened

APPENDIX III

Organization of Classes of the Christian Reformed Church

(* denotes a Classis no longer in existence under that name).

1857 Classis Michigan*
1868 Classis Illinois*
1877 Classis Iowa*
1877 Classis Hudson (New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, District of Columbia)
1882 Classis Holland (Michigan)
1886 Classis Muskegon (Michigan)
1890 Classis Hackensack (New Jersey, New York, North Carolina)
1896 Classis Ostfriesland (Iowa, Minnesota)
1898 Classis Grand Rapids East (Michigan, Ontario)
1898 Classis Grand Rapids West (Michigan)
1904 Classis Pella (Colorado, Iowa, Kansas)
1904 Classis Orange City (Iowa, Minnesota)
1908 Classis Zeeland (Michigan)
1910 Classis Pacific (Alberta, British Columbia, Idaho, Montana, Washington)
1912 Classis Sioux Center (Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota)
1924 Classis California (Arizona, California, New Mexico)
1924 Classis Wisconsin (Wisconsin)
1937 Classis Grand Rapids South (Michigan)
1937 Classis Kalamazoo (Indiana, Michigan, Ohio)
1937 Classis Minnesota (Alberta, Minnesota)
1941 Classis Chicago North (Illinois)
1941 Classis Chicago South (Illinois, Indiana, Ohio)

APPENDIX IV

Changes in the Name of the Christian Reformed Church

Official Name of the Church

Holland Reformed Church: 1859-1861
True Dutch Reformed Church (Ware Hollandsche Gereformeerde Kerk): 1861-1880
Holland Christian Reformed Church: 1880
(Holland) Christian Reformed Church: 1894
Christian Reformed Church: 1904

Official Name of the Highest Assembly

Classicale Vergadering (Classical Assembly): 1857-1865
Algemeene Vergadering (General Assembly): 1865-1879
Synodale Vergadering (Synodical Assembly): 1880
Synode van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk (Synod of the Christian Reformed Church): this name has been used in the *Acts of Synod* since 1894.

APPENDIX V

Numerical Growth of the Christian Reformed Church

Year	Classes	Churches	Ministers	Families	Communicants	Souls
1857	1	4	2	150	250	750 (est)
1880	4	39	19	2,014	3,566	12,001
1890	6	79	46	6,833	10,291	33,974
1900	9	144	98	10,614	15,584	53,794
1910	10	189	157	14,554	29,006	76,083
1920	13	245	234	19,438	42,854	95,995
1930	15	266	239	23,338	54,317	111,724
1940	18	298	278	26,008	64,263	121,755
1947	19	315	281	31,382	76,441	134,608

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